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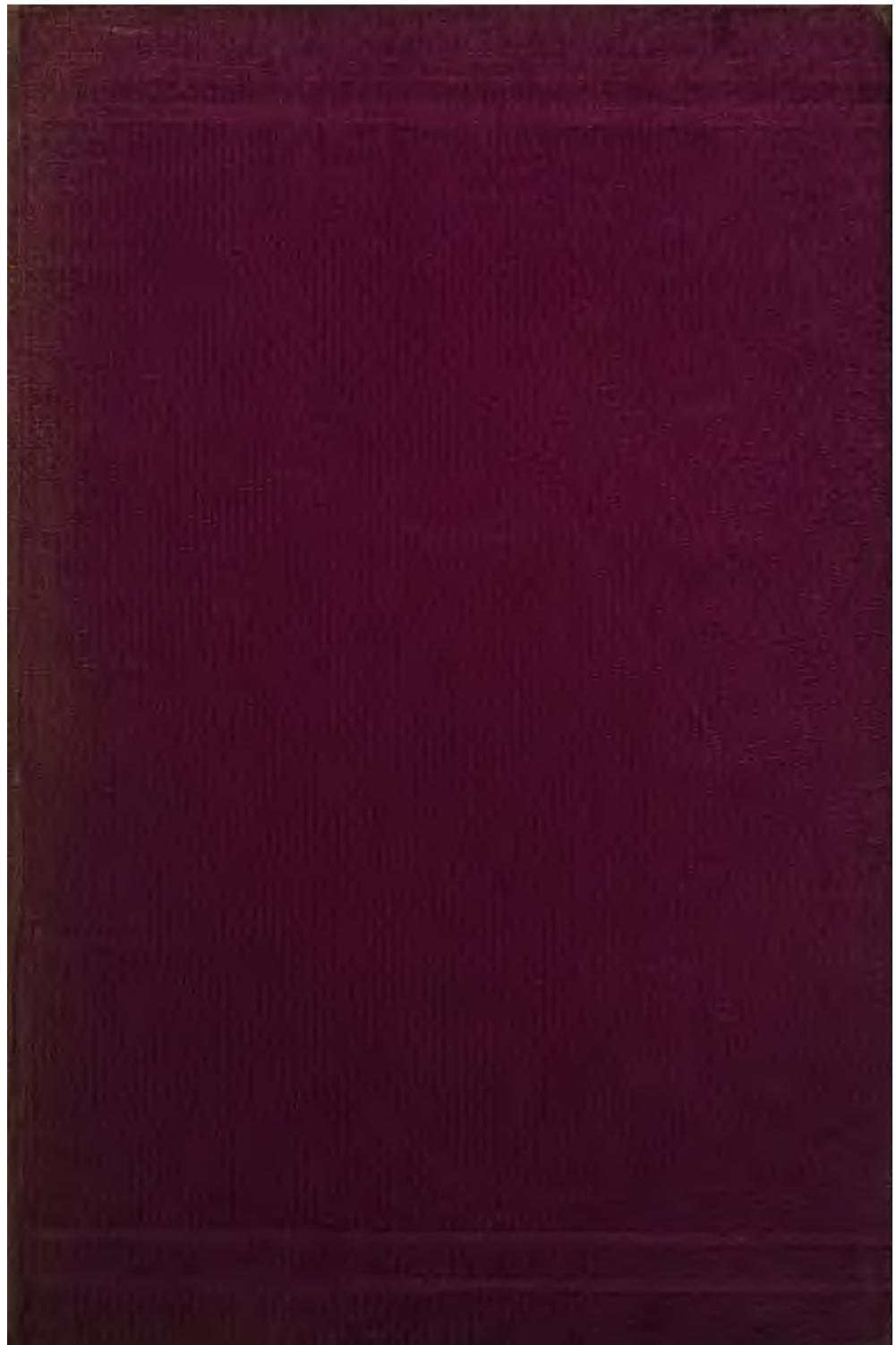
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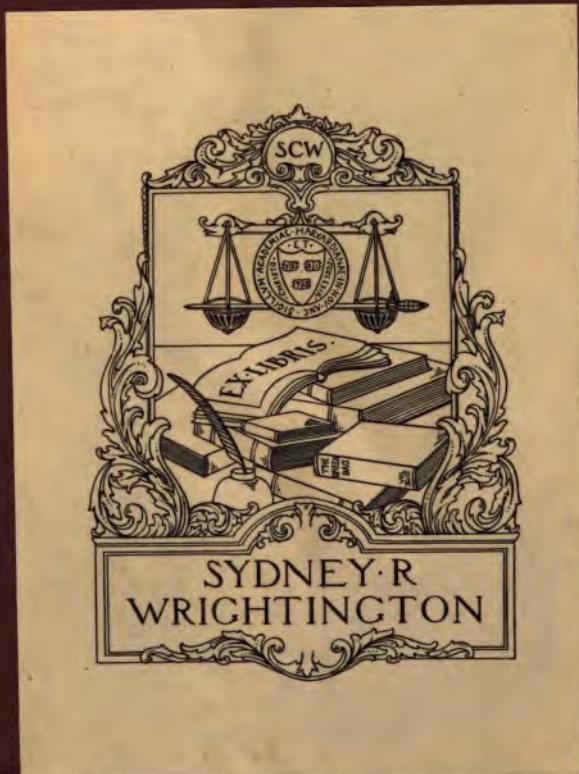
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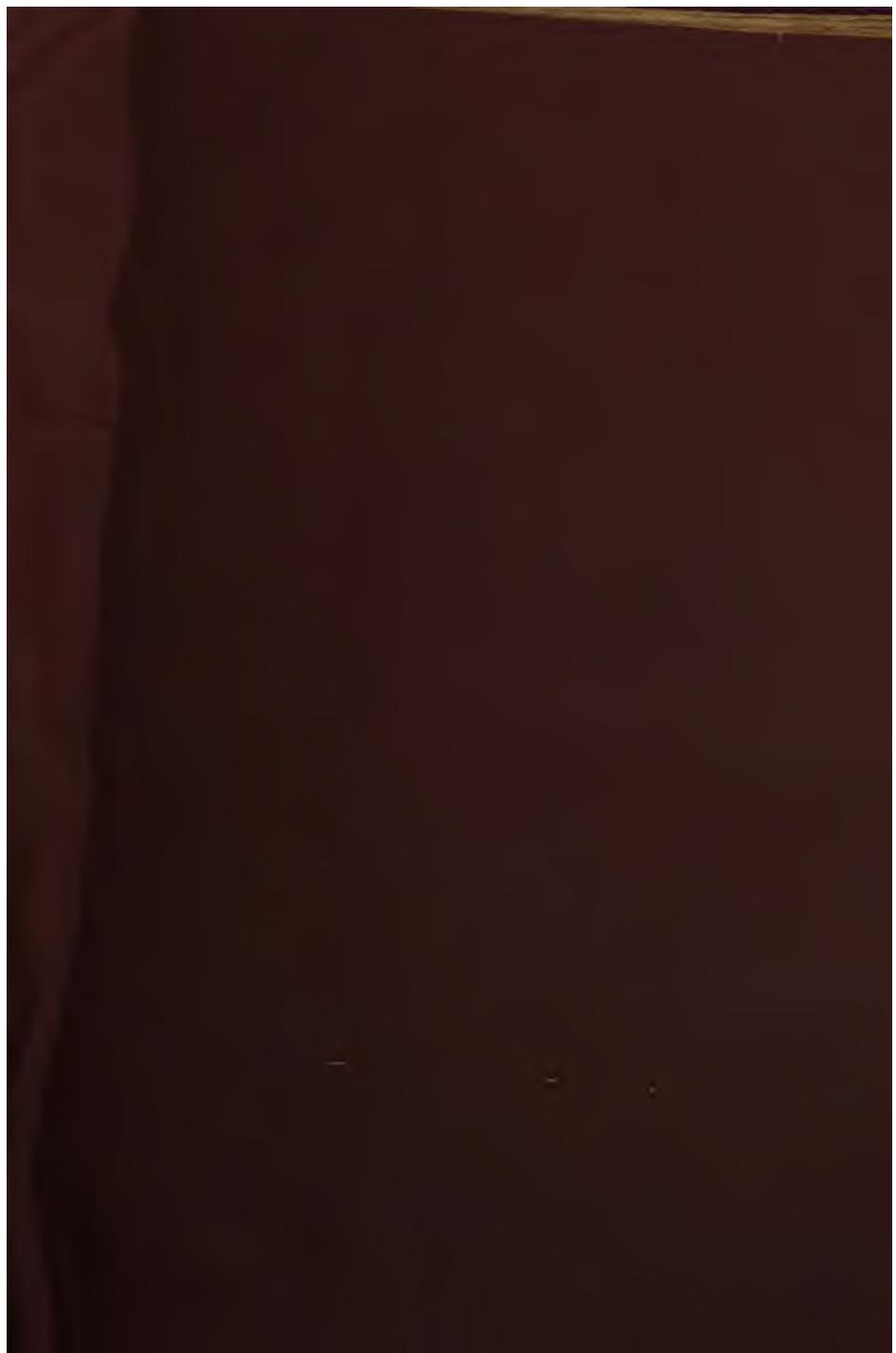
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JESUS THE MESSIAH

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'IF THIS COUNSEL OR THIS WORK BE OF MEN, IT WILL COME TO NOUGHT;
BUT IF IT BE OF GOD, YE CANNOT OVERTHROW IT, LEST HAPLY YE BE FOUND
EVEN TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD.'—*Acts v. 38, 39.*

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P R E F A C E.

THE Reformation of the sixteenth century professed to be a change back from the errors of Romanism to the pure doctrines of the Gospel ; and yet it was far from being so. It repudiated the more recent innovations of the Church of Rome, but it retained the glosses and traditional interpretations of the post-Apostolic ages. Its great merit was that it proclaimed and established liberty of conscience, though its founders did not altogether act up to their own principles ; in which respect their example has only too often been followed by their successors.

The spirit of inquiry awakened by the emancipation of the human mind from the thraldom in which it had so long been held by a bigoted, intolerant, and corrupt priesthood, could not fail to lead, sooner or later, to

doubts as to whether what have been accepted as the doctrines of the Apostles are so in reality,—whether the dogmatic theology of the second, third, and fourth centuries is in accordance with the teaching of our Lord and his immediate disciples; whilst the searching criticism to which the Canonical Scriptures have been subjected, has caused their authority, and even their authenticity, to be questioned.

The scepticism thence resulting has now become so general, and manifests itself so openly and unreservedly, that there is every reasonable ground for believing that a second Reformation, more important than that of Luther, is imminent; and this belief is strengthened by the fact, brought to notice by Dr. Döllinger in his recent lecture on Luther and his Reformation, that there exist so many points of similarity between the events of the last few years and those which immediately preceded that great spiritual Revolution. Added to which, the actual state of religious feeling generally resembles, in no small degree, that which prevailed in the heathen world when John the Baptist came preaching the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven,—as described in the ninth Chapter of the present Work, chiefly after the distinguished Bavarian theologian.

Though, at the present moment, opinions regarding the Creed a new Church should adopt may be too much divided to render the establishment of such a Church an easy task; still, whenever this Reformation of the nineteenth century shall ensue, one happy consequence of the liberality of sentiment now prevalent will assuredly be, that, instead of perpetuating sectarian animosity, it will be accompanied by increased religious freedom and spiritual union, eventually resulting, under God's blessing and guidance, in an absolute unity of faith.

Meanwhile, and so long as professors of Christianity shall still feel themselves bound by their convictions or conscientious scruples to dissent, it may be hoped that they will emulate the conduct, as rare in those early times as it has been in later ages, of Bishops Polycarp and Anicetus, the venerable representatives of the Eastern and Western Churches in the beginning of the second century; who (as is here related in the seventeenth Chapter) so worthily put in practice the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, that charity, or brotherly love, is far greater than either faith or hope.

Under the firm conviction that the Regeneration of Christianity, on the basis of the pure and unadulterated

doctrines of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus the Messiah,
cannot long be delayed, and in anticipation of that
momentous change, the present Work, embodying the
results of many years' serious study of our Lord's personal
history, has been written.

LONDON,
Thanksgiving Day, 1872.

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ERRATUM.

Page 26, line 23, *for or to some God read as to some God; or, more properly, as if (he were) a God—‘Christo quasi Deo.’*

JESUS THE MESSIAH.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST STATE OF MAN.

In the imaginary conversation which Cicero relates in his ‘Treatise on the Nature of the Gods,’ one of the interlocutors says, ‘If you ask me what God is, or what his nature and attributes are, I would imitate Simonides, who, when the tyrant Hiero proposed the same question to him, demanded a day to reflect on it. When, on the following day, the king required his answer, Simonides begged for two days more; and then, instead of replying, he kept on doubling the number of days. Hiero, in amazement, asked him why he did so. “Because,” replied he, “the longer I meditate on the question, the more difficult does it appear to me.”’

In the discussion which ensued, another speaker exclaims, ‘How inconsistent it is that, when you view a statue or a picture, you know it to be a work of art; when you behold the course of a ship afar off, you have no doubt of its being moved by reason and skill; when you look at a dial or a clypsedra, you understand the hours to be shown by design and not by chance; and yet that you should believe the universe, which contains all these works of art, and the artificers, and every thing else, to have been made without design or reason!’ He then gives an illustration from the poet Attius of a shepherd who had never seen a ship, ‘and who, when from a mountain he perceived afar

off the ship Argo, surprised and terrified at the novel object, after remaining some time in suspense as to what it could be, at length concluded it was some marine monster:—in which figure, it may be remarked, the poet forestalled the Mexicans, who so regarded the ships of Cortes. And Cicero's speaker then goes on to say, ‘And so, though philosophers may be perplexed by the first sight of the universe, yet, when they have observed its regular and even motions, and how all is regulated by settled rules and immutable constancy, they ought to understand that not only is there some inhabitant of this celestial and divine mansion, but that he is likewise the ruler and governor, as well as the architect, of so mighty a fabric.’

This argument of the heathen Roman philosopher supplied our English Christian divine Paley with that of his ‘Natural Theology,’ in which the supposed accidental discovery of a watch, and the conviction of the finder that it must be the work of an intelligent maker, lead to the inference of the separate existence of the Almighty Designer and Creator of the universe.

Nevertheless, the arguments of both writers, however able, are alike defective in one material respect. Cicero speaks of this conclusion as that of ‘philosophers;’ for his shepherd remains impressed with the notion that the Argo was a sea-monster. Paley, for his part, assumes the finder of the watch to be an intelligent being, competent to examine it, and to reason on the nature and uses of its various parts, and thence to draw the inference on which his argument is founded. But let the discoverer of the watch be supposed to be either a child or a savage,—a man in the state of nature, as it is so absurdly called,—would either of these treat the machine in the way suggested? Certainly not. The former would instinctively carry it to his mouth, and then probably let it drop; or, if old enough, he would listen to its ticking, would pull or knock it about, and would end by destroying it; unless, indeed, when tired of it as a plaything, he should cast it aside, for the sake of the stone, perhaps, which forms the subject of the opening part of Paley’s argument.

On the other hand, the savage man would view the unknown object with wonder, perchance with dread; by-and-by he would venture to touch it, handle it, and would be amazed at its mysterious noise and at the movement of the hands on the dial-plate. If he dared open it, he would be still more astonished at its internal mechanism. So far, however, from attributing its construction to an intelligent being, he would rather be inclined to look upon the watch itself as animate,—as Attius's shepherd regarded the Argo, and the Mexicans the Spanish ships,—and would reverence it, and most probably worship it as a divinity. After a while the watch would stop. But, instead of attributing this to the true cause, and of comprehending that it lay in his power to set the machine again in motion—to bring it back to life—by winding it up, the savage man would naturally conclude that this animate being had died. And whatever might be the immediate effect of this opinion upon his mind, the result would be that he would examine this now inanimate and no longer dreaded object more closely, like a child would pull it to pieces, and in the end destroy it, or else, not improbably, make of its remains a fetish or object of adoration.

That this is not merely a speculative opinion is established by a curious occurrence recorded in one of the public journals some time after the foregoing remarks were written. A native of Calcutta 'stole a musical box, ignorant of its use. On reaching the enclosure of Wellesley Square he concealed himself in a bush, and began to pick the lock. But the "lock" he picked was the key-hole of the musical spring, and lo! sweet sounds from the interior! He jumped up and flung it into the bush. Meanwhile, the native keeper of the garden came round, heard music from the bush, and trembled all over at the astounding phenomenon. He ran for an inspector, who finally arrested the box as it was rattling off the last bars of the last air—a rollicking comic song' *.

To enable the discoverer of the watch to speculate as to its origin, it is first necessary for him to be, if not actually a 'phi-

* 'Daily Telegraph,' April 25, 1871.

losopher,' at least an intelligent person, gifted with such reasoning powers, and possessed of such an amount of knowledge, as may qualify and enable him to judge rightly of the object thus falling in his way, so as not to be led to any conclusion other than the correct one by his ignorance and by the power of his imagination, which appears to be the less amenable to control the less the reasoning faculties are developed.

Not only to curb the imagination of the child and the savage man, but also to afford to them both such an amount of knowledge as would enable them to judge rightly respecting the watch, and, in fact, respecting every thing that requires the exercise of reason, it is essential that this faculty should have been sufficiently developed, which it could not be, either in the one or in the other, were they left to themselves. The child would grow up little, if any thing, better than a savage, as we unhappily see exemplified in our 'street Arabs;' whilst the savage would end his days in the same state of brutality and ignorance in which he had begun them. So it must always be, and so it has always been, as we find demonstrated, if, laying aside all assumptions and speculations, we look to the evidence of recorded facts.

The entire written history that we possess of the various nations of the earth, though oftentimes imperfect, and not unfrequently merely legendary or even fabulous, proves that where such nations were not known to have been instructed and civilized by some invading and conquering race, they looked up to some great leader or teacher, some legislator and reformer, mostly an immigrant from some other country or a native traveller in foreign lands, from whom they derived their culture, their religious faith, their position in the list of nations. In every case where the revival of learning may not be traced to such sources, the impulse has still been given from without. There is not a single authenticated instance of any nation or race having raised itself by its own unaided efforts.

Even in the case of 'self-taught' individuals, they cannot be regarded as exceptions to the rule. If they have not com-

menced their improvement under the immediate instruction of some master, they have lived among civilized beings, and have gained access to books, or had before their eyes some models, which they have studied or imitated, till they have acquired the power to manifest the inborn genius enabling them soon to surpass not only their contemporaries but also their teachers or their models. ‘Poeta nascitur, non fit,’ though a trite, is scarcely a truthful saying, unless it is qualified. The author of ‘Contarini Fleming’ shows its true meaning when he portrays ‘the melancholy and brooding childhood, the first indications of the predisposition, the growing consciousness of power, the reveries, the loneliness, the doubts, the moody misery, the ignorance of art, the failures, the despair’ of the ‘born’ poet; and then says, by the mouth of the philosopher Winter, ‘Remember this, that the painter and the poet, however assisted by their own organization, must alike perfect their style by the same process, I mean by studying the works themselves of great painters and great poets. . . . Both must alike study before they execute. Both must alike consult Nature and invent the beautiful.’

Nevertheless, the opinion most prevalent at the present day is that civilized man has, of his own natural powers, been able to raise himself from the state of the savage, that the savage has in like manner developed himself from the brute, that this latter has in its turn raised itself from some lower organization, and so on ad infinitum: which is virtually saying that man is his own creator. To show in detail the fallacy of this opinion would not be difficult; only it would occupy too much time, and would besides be beyond the scope of the present work. But one instance may be noticed, on account of its direct bearing on the subject treated of in the following pages.

It has been asserted that the present religious movement among the natives of India, of which Baboo Kesheb Chunder Sen is at the head, is not to be regarded as a restoration of ‘original religion,’—whatever may be intended by that term other than the belief entertained in common by Jews, Christians, and

Mohammedans in the One Supreme Being, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—and that neither did it emanate from the ancient religion of the country or from Christianity; but that it has commenced afresh from out of the innate resources of the human heart and soul. Yet nothing can be more incorrect than such a representation. Had it not been for the conquest of India by the English, and especially had not Ram Mohun Roy and other intelligent Hindoos held converse with and been educated among professors of Christianity, and acquired from them a knowledge of the substantial truth of their religious belief and of the absurdities of their own idolatrous superstitions, the Brahmo-Somaj would not have come into existence; for it could never have spontaneously emanated from the native resources of the human hearts and souls of the ignorant worshippers of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. The Hindoo reformer may flatter himself that he is original; but he demonstrated the contrary, when, in his reply to the representations of certain Christian ministers that he should adopt their confession of faith, he said:—‘I honour Christ as my Father’s beloved Son, and I honour all other prophets and martyrs; but I love my God above all. There is no name so sweet, so dear, as that of Father.’

Were it really true that ideas like these derived themselves from the innate resources of the human heart and soul, we must imagine the process by which Man arrived at this state of high religious development to have been something of the following kind. As soon as the light of reason dawned on the mind of the first being ‘worthy to be called man,’ he would have worshipped a rude fetish, the work of his own hands; then, from the innate resources of his own heart and soul becoming gradually enlightened, he would have rendered himself capable of conceiving an anthropomorphic god, who, however, to match his ‘creator’s’ own still degraded condition, would at first have been a devil; and this devil would, as man himself improved, by degrees have become converted into an agathodaimon or beneficent divinity; till eventually, under the full light of human reason, the absurdity of external divinities, whether bad or good, becoming appa-

rent, the Deity would be manifested in the mind of Man himself. And thus, as his primordial ancestor—not the

'Simia, quam similis, turpisima bestia, nobis,'

from which he glories in being descended, but his first human progenitor—grovelled before the rude fetish, the work of his own hands, so now Man, in the highest state of intellectual culture, adores the eidolon of his own mind, the image of himself.

It surely cannot be a sign of superiority that the intellect, because of its inability to raise itself to the comprehension of a spiritual Deity, loses itself in the mazes of metaphysics and materialism. It is not true wisdom, but the foolishness of a diseased or depraved imagination, that causes the mortal and sinful *Ego*—I by myself, I,—to be preferred to the Infinite and Eternal I AM. 'Know thyself' was the precept inscribed over the portico of the temple of Apollo at Delphi: the inscription on the true temple of the Almighty on earth—man's heart—should be 'Know thyself and God.'

With the conviction, then, that it is impossible for the creature, out of the depths of his moral consciousness, to form any true idea of his Maker, that it is not Man who can thus create God, the believer in Revelation reads in the most venerable record of antiquity—to call it by no higher title—that God created man, and made him in His own image, after His own likeness, and behold it was very good; and accepting the substantial truth of that record, he has no difficulty in understanding it to mean that the first man, instead of having existed in so debased a state as not to recognize his Maker, was created perfect after his kind, as nearly after the likeness of that Maker as the finite can resemble the Infinite,—that is to say, with a mind capable of knowing and appreciating his Creator and the works of creation.

By this it is not meant to affirm that Man was created with universal knowledge, or, indeed, that human knowledge of any specific kind was directly imparted to him by the Almighty,

either in the first instance or subsequently. What is intended is, that Man was originally endowed with such mental faculties as enabled him, through their exercise, to acquire knowledge on all matters of which his senses could take cognizance, to avail himself of that knowledge for his own purposes, and to communicate the same to others. As the new-born babe instinctively seeks the mother's breast and as instinctively draws the milk from it, so newly created and inexperienced Man instinctively set himself to observe, to know, and to utilize the material world. The vast intellects of the first members of the human race enabled them to make most rapid strides in the acquirement of knowledge of every kind, and in its application to the uses, the comforts, the enjoyments, and the luxuries of life. There were, indeed, 'giants in the earth in those days.'

But, however high the intellectual, as likewise the physical, condition of Man may have been when he left the hands of his Creator, he possessed within him, in common with all the works of creation as far as they are known to us, the germs of decay. Speaking of the 'religions' of mankind,—and the same argument applies to every thing human,—the Duke of Argyll says:—'Among the causes which have determined their form and character in different nations, we must reckon the moral corruption of human nature. I am not speaking of this corruption in a dogmatic and theological sense; I speak of it as an unquestionable fact, whatever be the history of its origin. By the corruption of human nature, I mean the undeniable fact that Man has a constant tendency to abuse his powers; to do what, according to his own standard of right and wrong, he knows he ought not to do; to be unjust and cruel towards others, and to fall into horrible and degrading superstitions. Human corruption, in this sense, is as much a fact in the natural history of Man as that he is a biped without feathers'*.

Entirely in the same sense, though with a more special application, the learned and pious Dr. Döllinger says:—'When once a dark cloud stole over Man's original consciousness of the Di-

* 'Primeval Man,' p. 108.

nity, and, in consequence of his own guilt, an estrangement of the creature from the one living God took place, Man, as under the overpowering sway of sense and sensual lust, proportionally weakened therefore in his moral freedom, was unable any longer to conceive of the Divinity as a pure, spiritual, supernatural, and infinite Being, distinct from the world, and exalted above it. And then it followed inevitably that, with his intellectual horizon bounded and confined within the limits of nature, he should seek to satisfy the inborn necessity of an acknowledgment and reverence of the Divinity by the deification of material nature; for, even in its obscuration, the idea of the Deity, no longer recognized, indeed, but still felt and perceived, continued powerful; and, in conjunction with it, the truth struck home that the Divinity manifested itself in nature as ever present and in operation. And now nature unfolded herself to Man's sense as a boundless demesne, wherein was contained an unfathomable plenitude of powers incommensurable and incalculable, and of energies not to be overcome. Everywhere, even where men, past their first impressions of sense, had already penetrated deeper into their own inner life, she encountered them as an inscrutable mystery. At the same time, however, a sympathy for naturalism, easily elevated into a passion, developed itself among them,—a feeling in common with it and after it,—which led, again, to a sacrifice of themselves, all the more readily made, to natural powers and natural impulses. And thus Man, deeper and deeper in the spells of his enchantress, and drawn downwards by their weight, had his moral consciousness overcome in proportion, and gave the fuller rein to impulses which were merely physical' *.

It is unnecessary to follow the eloquent divine in his powerful sketch of how the heathen deification of Nature led to an inexhaustible variety of divinities and forms of worship, 'according to the geographical division of zones and countries, and to the difference of the impressions which the phenomena and powers of nature produced on races more or less susceptible and excitable; and also as the imagination of man, selecting out of the

* 'The Gentile and the Jew,' *tr.* Darnell, i. 64, 65.

kingdom of nature that which most strongly impressed itself, fashioned it into a concrete divinity ; whereby, as time ran on, and as the natural impulse to create divinities acted on the various races of man, ‘the Divine assumed in their minds thousands of fantastic and fortuitous images and forms.’

In making these references to the writings of the gifted Bavarian Professor, it is proper to add that much more has been adopted from them in subsequent portions of the present work. This was done, however, long before the occurrence of the stirring events in which that eminent theologian occupies so prominent a position, and which, if there is an esoteric doctrine contained within his remarkable productions,—as they may see who can read between the lines,—will eventually occasion a far greater revolution within Christendom than did the Reformation of his countryman Luther.

Some striking illustrations of the views here entertained are furnished by the career of the European settlers in North America and their descendants, and, indeed, by that of all colonists in new countries. Though individually they may have acquired but little scientific or practical knowledge before leaving the mother country, they are nevertheless the offspring of a civilized people ; and, with the example of their ancestors before them, they have set to work to provide for their own wants and then to minister to those of others, through the development of the faculties innate in them as members of the parent society. The growth of such a people, rich in genius and in resources, and possessed of an imagination more vivid because of the absence of regular cultivation, taking up every thing in its turn and frequently out of its turn, cannot but be most rapid ; and the result is seen, not only in their scientific and artistic works, but in the invention and manufacture of numerous articles for domestic and social use, similar in general character to those of the Old World, but often widely different in form and in the mode of application, as instanced in the ‘notions’ brought to the markets of Europe from the United States. The same intellectual powers, finding such unbounded scope for their exercise, are led to the

conception of the most fantastic novelties, the performance of the most audacious experiments, the expression of the most eccentric opinions, the promulgation of the most extravagant doctrines ; as is evidenced in the religious and socialistic sects—Shakers, Mormons, Spiritualists, Free Lovers, and others, whose names are legion—which, developed from and mixed up with their originals after a marvellous fashion far beyond the experience of any other modern nation, pervade and agitate society.

These giants of the New World enjoy, in their vast and still, in great part, unoccupied continent, ample space wherein to stretch themselves physically, and free scope for their exuberant mental energy ; in which respect they have an incalculable advantage over their more stunted kinsmen in the Old World. The latter, cooped up within narrow and unexpansive limits, living in a tainted atmosphere, both physical and moral, and bound around by traditions and conventionalities, add to the other vices generated among masses of population, the greatest of all the curses of an artificial and (as it is called) highly civilized society, namely cant and hypocrisy. The former, daring, energetic, unscrupulous, and unrestrained by forms, bear well in mind the words of the Preacher,—“ Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ;” and in acting up to this precept they care but little for what may be said or thought of the way in which they do so.

Philo tells us that the sect of Essenes lived principally in villages, and avoided the towns, being sensible that as disease is generated by corruption, so is an indelible stain made upon the soul of man by the contagion of society. And the effects of this contagion are witnessed in the collapse and fall of great empires and institutions, both in ancient and in modern times. France, though not at all singular in the fulfilment of her destiny, affords the readiest example of how a rich and powerful nation, when raised to the summit of intellectual greatness and of scientific and artistic knowledge, may be subjected to an instantaneous check, the first step towards its fall, when it is not sustained by commensurate moral and religious sentiments and conduct.

From the time of their first Revolution, the French seem to have been actuated by the persuasion that the outward forms of religion and morality may serve for children and women and ignorant country boors, but that inward faith and purity are unworthy of men in the full growth of their intellect and reason. In the pride of that intellect they learned (to use the pointed language of Burke) to *hate* God with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their soul, and with all their strength. But hatred cannot long endure without the opportunity of manifesting itself on the object of aversion: it soon degenerates into contempt and indifference; and the belief in ‘one called God’—‘un nommé Dieu,’ to repeat the expression used by the Communist Rigault in a pass to a Romish clergyman desirous of visiting a sick man—has come to be ridiculed as an absurdity, or else pitied or apologized for as the infirmity of a weak mind.

These remarks have not been occasioned by the calamitous results of the recent conflict between France and Germany: they are the results of the observation of many years, matured by the reflection of what was said in a Report made to the Emperor Napoleon by Baron Stoffel, Military Attaché to the French Embassy at Berlin, as long ago as August the 2nd, 1869, nearly a twelvemonth before the war broke out, and at a time when the French Empire and its Monarch occupied, and were generally regarded as entitled to hold, the highest rank among ‘civilized’ nations and their rulers. Yet that well-informed and far-seeing Frenchman did not scruple to expose to his Sovereign the true condition of his countrymen as a nation.

After referring briefly to the healthy moral and social state of Germany, he exclaimed:—‘What a melancholy contrast does France offer in all this! Having sneered at every thing, she has lost the faculty of respecting any thing. Virtue, family life, patriotism, honour, religion, are represented to a frivolous generation as fitting subjects of ridicule. The theatres have become schools of shamelessness and obscenity. Drop by drop poison is instilled into the very core of an ignorant and enervated society, which has neither the insight nor the energy left to amend its

institutions, nor (which would be the most necessary step to take) become better informed or more moral. One after the other the fine qualities of the nation are dying out. Where is the generosity, the loyalty, the charm of our *esprit*, and our former elevation of soul? If this goes on, the time will come when this noble race of France will be known only by its faults. And France has no idea that, while she is sinking, more earnest nations are stealing a march upon her, are distancing her on the road to progress, and are preparing for her a secondary position in the world.' And the writer of this most able state-paper concluded by saying, 'There is no denying that the moral ties binding society together are getting more and more loosened in France, and that the torpor in which the people are enveloped, and their blind conceit, prevent their realizing the disorder eating up the social organism.'

Much has been written and preached about the condition of the civilized world of antiquity and of its capital, Rome, at the time when the light of the Gospel broke upon its darkness, as revealed in the pages of Roman and Greek writers of the period. But can it possibly have been worse than that of the intellectual capital of Christendom,—the residence of the Eldest Son of the Church, the successor and rival of the Cæsars,—as thus faithfully depicted by a confidential adviser of that now fallen potentate? After what has since occurred, it reads like a minatory prediction of one of the Israelitish prophets. And subsequent events have hardly been such as to warrant the hope that it may hereafter be said, as it was said of the people of Nineveh after the preaching of Jonah, 'And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not'*.

The formidable lesson just given to the French nation seems to have taught them little or nothing. Very few among them appear to measure the depth of the evil and detect its causes: all act and seem to think as if nothing had happened since July 1870. But this, instead of being the result of that perennial

* Jonah iii. 10.

youth and excessive vitality of which France so insanely boasts, is only evidence of the moral and intellectual decrepitude resulting from hypercivilization. Never was there a more striking exemplification of the trite saying, ‘*Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*’ Should they continue madly rushing on as they are doing, their national career must soon come to an end, and the name of France will unhappily be added to the list of nations whose only sad boast now is—‘*Fuimus.*’

Ought not this lesson to teach the necessity for a belief in the rule of a God who watches over the actions of His sinful creatures, individually and collectively, and to whom they are all accountable? Metaphysicians, after having sought in vain to reason out the idea of their Creator, will find themselves compelled to follow the example of the ‘philosophers’ of the first French Revolution. These proclaimed that there was no God; they declared that it was against reason and common sense to believe in such antiquated rubbish. For the future, Reason was to be man’s sole guide and ruler. And in order to testify their belief in this dogma of the newly established National Church, they solemnly enthroned on the high altar in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, in the place of the ‘Mother of God,’ an opera-dancer, whom they designated the Goddess of Reason, thus unconsciously showing how the one ‘Goddess’ is the spiritual daughter and successor of the other. For, as the Revolution itself originated in great measure out of the corrupt state of the French clergy, so the reaction against the gross superstitions of the ignorant masses led to infidelity.

But the reign of the new deity was not of long duration. The worship of the Goddess of Reason was done away with within seven months of its inauguration; and the National Convention, with Robespierre at their head, whilst admitting the ‘consolatory principle’ of the immortality of the soul, whereby they allowed that their fellow-creatures were amenable to the judgment of some tribunal other than their own bloodthirsty one, legislatively decreed the existence of a Supreme Being; and in so doing they unwittingly bore testimony to the truths of Revelation! For

'L'Être Suprême' is almost a literal translation into French of the name and title by which during countless ages the Almighty has been known to His chosen people—JEHOVAH ELOHIM.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS.

THE Jews are the only people in the world who possess a connected national history commencing with and extending from the creation of mankind. In whatever sense the events recorded in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis are to be construed, whether as legendary, allegorical, figurative, or mythical, they give, viewed as a whole, a connected and not unintelligible nor unreasonable account, such as is possessed by no other people, of Man's origin and relation to his Maker, and of the several stages of the history of the human race generally, as a prelude to the special history of the Hebrew nation, and to that of the advent of the Messiah as recorded in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

It is not necessary to enter here upon any minute consideration of that early history. 'God created man in His own image,' that is to say perfect, as far as humanity can be perfect, inwardly richly endowed, but totally ignorant as regards the outward world. But man's natural corruption, joined to his eagerness to acquire knowledge, led to inordinate curiosity and to his disobedience of his Maker's commands, and he fell. It may be that the narrative of the Fall of Man is not to be accepted in a purely literal sense, that it does not bear the signs of being intended as a literal history; still it serves to point out the declension, and evidently the rapid declension, of Man from the state of purity and perfection in which he had been created, and to record the fact, that long before the Flood 'the wicked-

ness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually.'

When the flood came for the punishment of men's sins, Noah, a just man and perfect in his generations, was, with his family, alone saved to replenish the earth. It is not intended to follow closely the historical events of which the Scripture itself gives only a general outline. It is sufficient to point out that the descendants of Noah, in the pride of intellect, combined to build the city and tower of Babel; and in this instance likewise they incurred the Divine displeasure.

The next great event recorded is the removal of Terah and his family from the country of their birth; and with this commences the particular history of the Hebrew nation. The immediate cause of this removal is not specified. But, arguing from analogy, it may be supposed to have been similar to that of the call of Noah, the intention of the Almighty being to save the fugitives from the destruction impending over their countrymen, who by their excessive wickedness had rendered themselves amenable to the wrath of God, and also to make their descendants in their turn instruments for the destruction of the sinful people whose countries they were made to occupy. At all events, it was so signal an act of obedience to the Divine will, of duty and abnegation, especially on the part of the Patriarch Abraham, who was subsequently called to remove further into the land of Canaan, that it elicited the peculiar and special recompense awarded in the promise made to him.

After the striking manifestation of the Patriarch's implicit faith in the Almighty by his readiness to offer up his only son Isaac, the child of promise, at Jehovah-jireh, on Mount Moriah, the blessing and promise which had been previously given to him were extended and specifically attached to the descendants of the Patriarch, it being said, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice'*.

And this specific promise made to Abraham was renewed at Bethel to his grandson Jacob, afterwards called Israel†.

* Gen. xxii. 18.

† Gen. xxviii. 14.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to give the history of God's chosen people, the Children of Israel, through all their defections, their continual forgetfulness of the God of their fore-fathers, and their desertion of His worship for that of the deities of the heathen nations that surrounded them. But the truth cannot be too strongly borne in mind, that the whole history and fate of the Israelites were influenced and determined by their guilt in forsaking, more and more, the pure faith of their great progenitor in the One and only true God, and by not listening to His revealed commands.

The countries in which the Patriarch Abraham and his family were directed to settle do certainly not appear to have been those in which they met with the pure worship of the Almighty. But this may have been the means of causing them and their descendants to maintain their own faith, if not in absolute purity, at all events comparatively so. With a view, however, to hinder them from mixing with those people, the ceremonial law under Moses was given to them as a hedge. Still this did not prevent their constant backsliding. Dissatisfied with their theocratic government, they desired human sovereigns like other nations. Instead of the simple tabernacle in which their forefathers had worshipped, a sumptuous temple was erected for the worship of the Eternal.

But the builder of that temple, the intellectually endowed son of David, Solomon, whose 'wisdom' is proverbial throughout every portion of the habitable world to which his name has reached, became an immoral, irreligious man. He loved many strange women of the nations 'concerning which the Eternal had said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods'. And he thus afforded a signal instance of the insufficiency of mere human intelligence and knowledge to check moral and religious declension,—a proof, indeed, that this latter is, alas! but too often a concomitant of the former.

* 1 Kings xi. 2.

The Israelitish nation followed the example of their ‘wise’ sovereign ; and so they went on from bad to worse. It was only through the constant mercy of the Almighty, in remembrance of His reiterated promise, that the rebellious descendants of Abraham did not become merged into the heathens by whom they were surrounded, and altogether lost.

The annihilation of the separate kingdom of the Ten Tribes of Israel, called also that of Joseph or Ephraim, and the captivity of the two remaining Tribes under the rule of the descendants of their king David, of the house of Judah, at length effectually opened the eyes of the Jews to the enormity of their conduct. They returned from Babylon effectually cured of their polytheistic tendencies ; and for nearly twenty-four centuries since that period they have never again been guilty of the sin of denying the God of their fathers. But, in spite of this, neither their disposition nor their intellectual faculties—perverted and debased as they had become through the traditions and fables learned in Babylon and the other countries in which they had been dispersed—were in a fit state to retain the truth pure and undefiled. Their consciousness, through all their trials and adversities, that they were still the chosen people of their God, that He, like an indulgent father, would never cast them entirely off, instead of teaching them obedience and humble submission to His will, only filled their minds with spiritual pride, and blinded them to the proper understanding of the oracles of the Eternal, of which they were the favoured depositaries. As the chosen of God, they rightly felt their faith in Him to be the only true one, and they were likewise persuaded that, sooner or later, that faith was destined to be extended over all the families of mankind. But at the same time they wrongly interpreted the promises of the Eternal, which they imagined to signify that they were to look for the coming of a temporal chief, a descendant of the illustrious house of David, under whom the kingdom of Israel would be restored in more than its pristine power and splendour, and that this kingdom should swallow up all the other kingdoms of the earth, and should never be overthrown. The lower the for-

tunes of the nation fell, the higher rose their expectations of the advent of the promised Saviour; and when at length they were subjugated by the Romans, and their country had virtually become a province of the empire, instead of giving way to despair, they then felt more than ever that the moment of deliverance was at hand, and that the king so long and anxiously looked for must appear. Their faith in this temporal restoration of the kingdom of Israel under a descendant of David was unbounded. The valiant Maccabees had shown the heathen world what Jewish heroes were capable of doing; and daring spirits were not wanting to unfurl the standard of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, as was instanced in the case of more than one pretender to the throne of David before the appearance of our Lord Jesus, and in the great and final rising of the nation in the beginning of the second century of the Christian era.

The precise nature and character of the expected Saviour, and the manner in which he was to accomplish his mission, were, however, conceived differently at different times and by different individuals. The great mass of the nation, as has been said, looked for the restoration of the temporal kingdom of Israel under a descendant of David; but, in the face of the overwhelming power of the Roman emperors, the feeling was dying out with many that this could ever be accomplished; and the conquest of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple by Titus, the son of the Emperor Vespasian, in A.D. 70, and the subsequent destruction of the city and annihilation of the Jewish nation by Hadrian, fifty years later, consequent on the last great struggle under the pseudo-Messiah, the anti-Christ, Bar Cocaba, at length convinced all but a few enthusiasts, who will always be found hoping against hope, that there could no longer be any reasonable expectation of the restoration of the temporal kingdom of David by human means, and that the Messiah or Anointed King must therefore be endowed with supernatural powers, which he would exercise to aid his people in breaking and throwing off the hated yoke of the foreign occupants of the sacred soil, on whom he and they together would take full vengeance; and he would then

establish himself on his throne in Jerusalem, and there receive the homage of the whole Gentile world. A somewhat similar notion prevails even at the present day, though it is gradually being abandoned as altogether fallacious and hopeless.

There were, however, not a few among the Jews who looked to the Advent of the Messiah for something widely different from the restoration of the temporal kingdom of David, either by natural or by supernatural means. The intelligent spirits, the enlightened interpreters of the promises of the Almighty and the predictions of His prophets, the true watchers of the signs of the times, saw plainly that such an idea was as visionary as it is seen to be at the present time; and they therefore looked—as the enlightened Jews are now beginning to look—for the spiritual regeneration of God's chosen people, and thus to the establishment of His kingdom on earth,—a kingdom which should comprise not only the Jews but the Gentiles likewise, and should, in fact, be a true and literal fulfilment of the promise to their forefather Abraham, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

In the estimation of countless millions of believers, who are daily and hourly increasing in numbers, the hope and expectation of Israel was realized in the generation before the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple, and indeed, in anticipation of that event, in the person of our Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, who is usually spoken of as Jesus Christ, and whom Christians of all denominations, and, it must be added, Mohammedans likewise, concur in revering as the predicted Messiah, or Anointed King of Israel, however much they may differ as to his other attributes.

The most satisfactory evidence of what were the opinions of the Jews themselves respecting the character and attributes of the Messiah must surely be the declarations of his earliest disciples, who, being Jews, would not have acknowledged Jesus as such had they not believed him to fulfil the conditions of prophecy, and consequently the expectations of themselves and their countrymen. Now several of such declarations are recorded in

the Acts of the Apostles as having been made by Peter and by Stephen*. For these it will be sufficient to refer to the passages where they occur. What will be here dwelt on is the testimony of the Jew Saul of Tarsus, better known as the Christian Apostle Paul, who describes himself as an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the Tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of the Hebrews; a Jew circumcised on the eighth day; brought up at Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel the Aged, who was the grandson of the great Hillel the Orthodox, and himself one of the most famous Rabbis of the Jewish Sanhedrin; he (Paul) being taught according to the manner of the Law, and further, ‘as touching the Law a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee, and as touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless’†: that is to say, an orthodox Jew both in theory and in practice, who, before his conversion to the belief in Jesus as the Messiah, beyond measure persecuted the Congregation—badly translated ‘Church’—of God, and wasted it, and profited in the Jews’ religion above many his equals in his own nation, being more zealous of the traditions of his fathers; one, in fact, whose writings prove him to have been a most learned Scribe or Doctor of the Law, and who must, if any one could, have thoroughly understood the nature and character of the Hope of Israel, as taught in the orthodox school of his master, Rabbi Gamaliel.

Now it is in these terms that this learned and pious Jewish Scribe is recorded as having expressed himself in the synagogue of his nation at Antioch, at the request of its rulers, after the reading of the Law and the Prophets on the Sabbath-day:—‘Shema’ Israel—Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought He them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And

*Acts ii. 22-36; iii. 12-26; iv. 8-12; vii. 2, 53.

† See Rom. xi. 1; Phil. iii. 5-6; Acts xxii. 3; xxiii. 6.

after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man's seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus*.

Further, in the commencement of his First Epistle to the Romans, the same Paul speaks of 'Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'†. And again in his Epistle to the Galatians, he says:—'When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God, through the Messiah'‡.

Many more texts might be, and, indeed, in the sequel will be, cited; but those here given suffice for the present to show the opinion entertained by this learned and pious disciple of Gamaliel of the character and attributes of the expected Messiah, and his belief in their application to Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul was, however, one of those enlightened Jews who looked for the spiritual regeneration of his nation through the coming of the Messiah, and not for the restoration of the temporal kingdom of David, on which so many of the first disciples of Jesus built their hopes. For, as he himself declared to the Corinthians, 'When the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, we preach a crucified Messiah, unto the Jews a stumbling-block,

* Acts xiii. 16-23.

† Rom. i. 3-4.

‡ Gal. iv. 4-7.

and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the Messiah, the power of God and the wisdom of God'*'. That is to say, the Jews expected the Messiah to manifest himself in a manner that should be a conclusive proof of his really being the Anointed King, the true successor of his ancestor David; and to these, as the Apostle truly said, a crucified, or suffering, Messiah, like Jesus, was a stumbling-block in the way of their belief, inasmuch as he did not fulfil their expectation, which their learned co-religionist explained to them was an erroneous one. On the other hand, as regards the Gentiles, who could not be expected to know, or to care, much if any thing at all about Jesus merely as the descendant and successor of David, the notion of a king without a kingdom, one who was not and never had been a king in their estimation, was simply foolishness—an absurdity. But, explains the spiritually instructed disciple of Gamaliel, 'to them which are called'—*αἵρετοι κληροίς*, who are members of his *'Εκκλησία*, Ecclesia or Congregation ('Church')—' both Jews and Gentiles, Jesus is 'the Messiah, the power of God and the wisdom of God,' he in whom is fulfilled the promise made to his forefather Abraham, 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.'

To the early Christians the Kingdom of God on earth under the spiritual rule of the Messiah was a mystery, as, indeed, it has continued to be to most believers down to the present day; and therefore it is not surprising that many of them should have looked for the speedy return of their Lord on earth to judge the world. It was not, and still is not, borne in mind that, in the sight of the Eternal, 'a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night'†; or, as in the Second Epistle bearing the name of St. Peter it had to be explained to those who were impatient for the second coming of the Messiah, 'Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His pro-

* 1 Cor. i. 22-24.

† Ps. xc. 4.

mise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. And when we regard the extension of the Messiah's kingdom on earth at the present day, when we witness the countless millions who have been taught to call on the name of Jesus during the two thousand years—with the Lord but two days—which have not yet fully elapsed since the Messiah began his reign ; and when we further reflect on the progress which the preaching of the Gospel is making among the greater multitudes in the further East, who have only now begun to listen to its joyful tidings ; we may faithfully believe that, when the third day or millennium shall dawn, every tongue will learn to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Messiah, and to repeat the words taught us by himself, ‘Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.’

CHAPTER III.

THE SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF JESUS.

To those persons who believe that the Holy Scriptures contain the Word of God, to those, indeed, who accept the historical portions of the Bible as veracious records, the New Testament in itself affords sufficient evidence of the existence on earth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the truth of the principal occurrences of his life.

There are, however, many persons who assert, apparently not without reason, that the Gospel histories were not written at the early dates usually assigned to them, and that consequently they are not valid evidence as to the truth of the events which they narrate ; whilst others contend that the opinion that Jesus was any thing more than an ordinary mortal is the invention of a

* 2 Pet. iii. 8-9.

subsequent period; and some go even so far as to doubt, if not absolutely to deny, his personal individuality.

The most effectual way of meeting such arguments is to adduce evidence which is not open to similar objections.

It will be assumed that the raisers of such objections do not contend that all history of every kind is false or fabulous. They have a reasonable faith in the Greek and Roman historians; and though demurring to the truth of their accounts of the origin and early history of their respective nations, these critics do not hesitate to believe in the events alleged to have occurred at or about the times when the narrators of those events themselves lived. No objection, then, will be raised against such writers as Suetonius, Tacitus, and the younger Pliny, when describing events which notoriously occurred in and about their own times. These three writers (as is well known) flourished in the latter half of the first and the beginning of the second century of the Christian era, and they all record matters relating to the early professors of Christianity and to the founder of that religion, in respect of which they must be accepted as trustworthy witnesses; inasmuch as they none of them were members of the new faith or favourers of it, whilst they possessed only such general, superficial, and, in part, erroneous notions of the matters to which they allude, as to establish convincingly that their statements were made spontaneously and without any interested motive or ulterior object.

The first of these writers, Suetonius, who flourished about forty years after the Crucifixion of Jesus, states that the Emperor Claudius 'banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Christus' *.

Next Tacitus, who flourished some thirty years later, narrates how the Emperor Nero, in order to free himself from the obloquy of having ordered the conflagration of Rome, 'falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, so the founder was named, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judæa, in

* 'Lives of the Cæsars,' Claud. xxv.

the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only throughout Judæa, where the mischief originated, but in the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were seized who confessed they were Christians; next, on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of hating the human race' *.

The letter of Pliny, Proconsul of Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan, written A.D. 100, respecting the persecution of the Christians within his province, is so well known that it is not necessary to make from it more than the following extract:—
‘ Some among those who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately afterwards denied it; the rest owned, indeed, they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced their error. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, to be that they met on a certain stated day before it was light, and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ, or to some God, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then to reassemble to eat in common a harmless meal’ †. The Roman Governor further bears testimony to the great number of Christians in Bithynia, consisting of persons of all ranks and ages, and of both sexes. ‘ In fact,’ says he, ‘ this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread infection among the neighbouring villages and country.’

From these statements the following facts appear to be incontrovertibly established:—First, that in the reign of the Emperor

* ‘Annals,’ xv. 44.

† ‘Letters,’ x. 97.

Tiberius, extending from A.D. 25 to A.D. 41,—the accepted date is A.D. 30, which by no possibility can be far wrong,—a certain Jew, known as ‘Christus’ or ‘Chrēstus,’ was executed as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judæa; secondly, that in the reign of Claudius, which extended from A.D. 41 to A.D. 54—taking the mean, it may be said to be about A.D. 48, or less than twenty years after the death of this Jew, ‘Christus,’—his co-religionists were banished from Rome because they were continually making disturbances, as was alleged, at his instigation; thirdly, that less than twenty years later, at the time of the conflagration of Rome, A.D. 64,—consequently six years before the fall of Jerusalem,—the followers of this ‘Christus’ were no longer looked on as Jews, but were known in Rome as ‘Christians,’ and had become of such importance as to be objects of suspicion, if not of dread, to the Emperor Nero, on account of their alleged atrocities, pernicious superstitions, and hatred of the human race; and lastly, that these ‘contagious superstitions’ of the Christians spread so rapidly over the whole Roman empire, that at the close of the first century they were subjected to a general persecution.

The testimony on which these facts are established is beyond the reach of cavil or objection. Not one of the three heathen writers speaks of the Jewish ringleader under his proper name Jesus, nor does any one of them appear to have the remotest idea that what they imagine to be the proper name of this ‘instigator’ of the Jews is in truth his peculiar title of the Messiah, or Anointed King of Israel, under its Greek form *Xpīotōs*! This highly significant fact will be commented on in a subsequent chapter*: it is here sufficient to direct attention to its great importance.

Turning, now, to the consideration of the authenticity of the Scriptures of the New Testament, we find that whatever doubts may exist with respect to the composition of the four Gospels and several other of the canonical writings, there is none whatever as regards four (at least) of the Epistles of the Apostle

* See Chapter V. page 61.

Paul, namely, those to the Romans, Corinthians (2), and Galatians, the genuineness of which, after having been contested inch by inch, is now acknowledged even by the most adverse critics ; and hence it results that from the contents of these four Epistles, coupled with what is said by the three Roman authors named above, we find ourselves possessed of sufficient materials to enable us, without the aid of the Gospel histories, to sketch an outline (rough, it is true, but still perfectly distinct and real) of the essential facts of the appearance on earth of our Lord Jesus as the Messiah,—Christus, the Jewish ringleader,—of his crucifixion and resurrection, and of his doctrine and its operation on his earliest followers in their religious faith and moral conduct ; and as this outline corresponds at all material points with the more detailed narratives contained in the historical Gospels, it furnishes conclusive proof of the substantial truth of those narratives.

The absence of all mention of Jesus by contemporaneous Jewish writers has, indeed, been made an argument against the authenticity of his history, and even against the fact of his existence. Such an argument cannot, however, be at all maintained. In the first place, silence in itself proves nothing. ‘*De non apparentibus et de non existentibus eadem est ratio*’ may be a good legal maxim, but it only means that nothing can be treated as a fact unless and until its existence is based on evidence of some sort, even though that evidence may be but circumstantial or presumptive, and though the alleged fact should afterwards be disproved. But this is very different from the assumption, which has been so fruitful a source of error, that what is not apparent cannot exist, or could not ever have existed. The world, in its complacent self-sufficiency, is too ready to take for granted the ignorance of past ages, and to suppose the knowledge of the ancients to have been limited to what only we know them to have known, unmindful of the many causes there may have been to prevent the knowledge they really possessed from being handed down to us.

M. Renan states* that the schismatic School of Alexandrian

* ‘*Vie de Jesus*.’

Jews, the members of which devoted themselves to the study of Greek literature, was so completely detached from Jerusalem that no trace of its existence is to be met with in the Talmud or in the Jewish traditions. Still it would be unreasonable to infer from this silence that such a school did not exist. For instance, no one would think of founding upon it an argument against the personal existence of Philo. And, in like manner, it is not to be imagined that an individual who claimed, and by his followers was acknowledged, to be the Messiah of prophecy, and who is described by Roman historians of the first century as a notorious Jewish ringleader named Christus or Chrestus, should not have been of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the chronicles or other writings of the Jewish nation. On the contrary, the suppression by the Jews of all mention of the fact of the existence of Jesus Christ, that is to say Jesus the Messiah, affords the strongest presumptive proof not only of his personal existence, but of his having been known to them in that character ; for it is a maxim of law that the suppression of evidence, like the destruction or mutilation of any written document, affords presumption that there was an interested motive for preventing the truth from being made manifest ; and the fact that the Crucifixion of the Messiah Jesus was felt by the heads of the nation to be a national sin and disgrace, would have been a sufficient motive for their doing all in their power to suppress the evidence of this fact, and with it that of the very existence of Jesus himself. Dean Milman, when noticing the remarkable circumstance that the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, does not mention a single word of the incident of the Golden Calf made by Aaron at Mount Sinai, as recorded in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus, says, ‘Josephus, jealous of the national honour, omits the whole scene’*. And, in like manner, jealousy of the national honour would have prompted the Jewish scribes to omit all mention of Jesus the Messiah, as in fact Josephus himself did.

It will doubtless be alleged that in the received text of the Jewish historian there are two passages in which the name of

* ‘History of the Jews.’

Jesus actually occurs; but these passages are so manifestly the results of a ‘pious fraud,’ most clumsily executed by the early Christian clergy, that they would really not have been deemed worthy of notice here were it not for M. Renan’s extraordinary advocacy of their authenticity.

In the one of these passages Jesus is described as a ‘wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man;’ and it is added, ‘He was Christ,’ *Xριστος οὗτος ἦν**: in the other, James is spoken of as the brother of ‘Jesus, who was called Christ,’ *Ιησοῦν τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ*†. These two passages the French scholar declares to be ‘perfectly in the spirit of Josephus;’ and he adds, that ‘if that historian made mention of Jesus at all, this is precisely the manner in which he would speak of him.’ He admits, however, that a Christian hand has been at work on the former passage, by adding the words ‘if it be lawful to call him a man;’ because without that addition it would have been almost blasphemous; and that perhaps certain expressions have been modified or omitted, as for example the phrase *Xριστος οὗτος ἦν*, which, in the original, must have been *Xριστος οὗτος ἐλεγέντος*.

To this it may be categorically replied that the passages in question are not at all in the spirit of Josephus, and that not only he, but no Jew of the period, would under any circumstances have spoken of our Lord in such terms. It is essential that this denial should be substantiated in detail. In the first place, then, M. Renan is altogether mistaken in assuming that the words ‘if it be lawful to call him a man’ were introduced for the reason that without them the passage would have been almost blasphemous. Josephus was a Jew who did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah or Christ; and, consequently, instead of speaking of him reverentially, he might rather have been expected to call Jesus himself a blasphemer, as the high-priest Caiaphas did‡. And even had he been a convert to Christianity, it would not in the time of Josephus have been blasphemous to speak of Jesus as a man, inasmuch as he was so designated by his own disciples on frequent occasions §, and especially by St. Paul, who speaks of

* ‘Antiq.’ xviii. 3, 3.

† ‘Antiq.’ xx. 9, 1.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 65.

§ See Acts ii. 22, xiii. 38, xvii. 31; Phil. ii. 8; Hebr. viii. 3, x. 12, &c.

'one man, Jesus the Messiah'*'. In the next place, no Jew in the time of Josephus, whether a believer in our Lord or not, would have spoken of Him as *Xp̄iōt̄os*, as if this were a proper name. A believer would have said *o Xp̄iōt̄os*—*the Christ or Messiah*; whilst an unbeliever would have spoken contemptuously of one Jesus of Nazareth, who pretended to be the Messiah, and was in consequence put to death by Pontius Pilate, much in the same way as our Lord is spoken of by Josephus's contemporary Tacitus. Further, Josephus could by no possibility have said of Jesus, as he is made to say, that 'he appeared to his disciples alive on the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold this and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him ;' for this would have been affirming both the fact of our Lord's resurrection, and also the writer's belief in his being the Messiah of prophecy. And, above all, the Jewish historian could not possibly have said of the believers in the Messiah, that 'the tribe (*φυλαν*) of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day.' For Josephus was a learned priest of the tribe of Levi, who lived in the next generation after the Crucifixion of Jesus, and apparently was born before that event; and therefore it is palpably absurd to imagine that he could have spoken of Jesus and his followers as if they formed a separate 'tribe,' like those of the Children of Israel, and would have said of them that they were 'not extinct to this day,' when in fact the Christian religion had then only just begun to take root.

It ought not, then, to be doubted for a single moment that the passages in question are interpolations of a comparatively late date, the language in which they are couched having been adopted by their Gentile Christian author, in order to give to them what he ignorantly imagined to be 'la couleur locale.' And as by that time the human nature of our Lord had become almost eclipsed by his divine nature, it is perfectly intelligible that the 'pious' interpolator, though unscrupulous in the commission of this fraud 'for the good of Holy Church,' should still have hesitated to speak of Jesus otherwise than as the Son of God; and so

* Romans v. 15.

he eased his conscience by adding the words, ‘if it be lawful to call him a man.’

Unhappily it is thus that what are designated ‘Evidences of Christianity’ have been concocted since the earliest ages. Were it not that the experience of our Courts of Justice shows that false evidence is oftentimes resorted to from a desire to corroborate facts that are true in themselves, the fabrication of such evidence would be calculated to raise the strongest presumption against a cause whose advocates had been so weak and so wicked as to resort to this dangerous expedient.

Rightly considered, the silence of Josephus respecting the existence of Jesus and his execution for having claimed to be the Messiah or Christ, ought to have been welcomed by the misguided Christian interpolator and his abettors as the strongest presumptive evidence in support of those facts, which jealousy for the national honour prompted the Jewish historian to suppress, in like manner as he suppressed the fact of the earlier sin of his nation in worshipping the golden calf.

We have among ourselves a similar instance of the suppression of an historical fact, on account of its having been looked on as a national disgrace, in the treatment to which the Protector Oliver Cromwell has been subjected. Although independent historians could not be prevented from making mention of him both personally and in connexion with the nation which during eleven years he governed not ingloriously (just as the Roman historians Suetonius and Tacitus bore testimony to the existence of our Lord Jesus), still, officially, that is to say in the annals of the legislature of the realm, the Protector is ignored. Charles the First ceased to reign in the year 1649, and his son Charles the Second, who during the following eleven years was a fugitive and resided abroad, is nevertheless alleged to have immediately succeeded his father on the throne; the year 1660, in which he returned to England, being recorded as the twelfth year of his reign in our statute books, which contain no traces of the Protector Cromwell, or of the laws passed by the British Parliament under his government, except in so far as the same laws were con-

firmed or reenacted after Charles's true accession to the throne, or 'Restoration,' as it is improperly designated. And to this day no memorial of the great Protector is to be seen among those of the sovereigns and statesmen whose effigies ornament our Houses of Parliament. In fact, from the royalist point of view there never was such a person as Oliver Cromwell in connexion with the government of England, just as from the 'orthodox' Jewish point of view there never was such a person as Jesus the Messiah or Christ.

We now come to the consideration of those documents which are usually regarded as the sources of the history of our Lord's life and teaching, and on which the doctrines of Christianity profess to be based. These are the four Gospels, bearing respectively the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the several Epistles of St. Paul and other Apostles, with the Books of the Acts of the Apostles and the Revelation of St. John, forming together the Canon of the New Testament. As all these latter writings, looked on merely in the character of historical documents, relate principally, if not entirely, to the Resurrection of our Lord and its consequences, they need not be further alluded to at the present stage of the inquiry.

As regards the Gospels, the authorship of the first and fourth is commonly attributed to the two Apostles whose names they respectively bear; the second and third are in like manner supposed to be the composition of companions of the apostles Peter and Paul, Luke, the writer of the latter, being also said to be the author of the Acts of the Apostles.

The alleged authorship of these several works has been disputed, and seemingly successfully; though this, in itself, might not essentially affect their authority. The Psalms of David and the Proverbs of Solomon contain internal evidence of not having been wholly written by the monarchs whose names they bear; but this does not materially detract from their value.

A more serious objection is, that the several narratives are not always consistent with one another, and that even in some cases they are contradictory. Still this, if considered reasonably and

without any preconceived notions, ought not to invalidate the testimony of the writers as veracious and trustworthy recorders of the main facts with respect to which they agree. Indeed, so far from leading to the illogical conclusion that because they do not all coincide in every, even the minutest particular, they are therefore untrustworthy altogether, their differing in such trifling circumstances, whilst agreeing as regards the main facts, is the most convincing proof of the substantial truth of those facts. For their absolute agreement on all points and in all the details would have been a sure sign of their being copied the one from the other, whereby the testimony of their writers would lose its value as the evidence of independent witnesses, if indeed it did not give rise to the suspicion that that testimony had been fabricated for the purpose of giving currency to falsehoods.

It is not requisite to enter here into any elaborate criticism of the four Gospels. The first three, which profess to give an historical summary of the life and teaching of our Lord, and are therefore styled synoptical, agree substantially on most, if not all, material points. The fourth Gospel is chiefly didactic and doctrinal; but it is also in part historical, containing several incidents that are not touched on or even alluded to in the other gospels; in addition to which it represents some most important matters very differently.

Speaking of the synoptical Gospels, the present Archbishop of York (Dr. Thomson) says: ‘The results of criticism as to the relation of the three Gospels are somewhat humiliating. Up to this day (1863) three views are maintained with equal ardour: (a) that Mark’s Gospel is the original Gospel, out of which the other two have been developed; (b) that it is a compilation from the other two, and therefore written last; (c) that it was copied from that of Matthew, and forms a link of transition between the other two’*. In other words, it has not been possible to arrive at any satisfactory and conclusive result respecting the data or composition, and consequently the intrinsic value, of those three Gospel histories.

* Smith’s ‘Dictionary of the Bible.’

Nevertheless it may be affirmed respecting the three synoptical Gospels that the first is the most valuable, as containing the fullest record of the sayings of our Lord Jesus in a form bearing the impress of truth ; though it manifestly contains at the same time considerable interpolations and additions, probably made at the time when this Gospel was translated into Greek from the Jewish language, in which it appears to have been originally written.

The second Gospel might seem to be a compilation from the first, rather than that the first was developed from it. But there is no good reason why it should not be an independent original document, which was subsequently modified.

The third Gospel, bearing the name of Luke, the ‘beloved physician’ of Paul, cannot be the composition of its alleged author ; for it professes to have been written for the information of one Theophilus, to whom it is addressed, respecting ‘those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them unto us ;’ the fact being, as the writer commences by saying, that ‘many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of these things ;’ and as he could not truly have said this unless there were already in existence several more Gospel histories than merely the two bearing the names of Matthew and Mark, it follows that a later date must be attributed to this document than the lifetime of a companion of St. Paul. And the statement that ‘many’ such histories were then in existence, and that this additional one was written in order that Theophilus (and, indeed, all lovers of God) ‘might know the certainty of those things,’ seems to imply that the other narratives then extant were not to be depended on, and therefore were intended to be superseded by this authoritative version. In fact, the third Gospel may probably be regarded as the first attempt of the heads of the early Christian ‘Church’ to assert their authority in putting forth a narrative of its founder’s life which should be accepted as truthful and orthodox ; all others, if not actually stigmatized as heterodox, being impliedly held up

as untrustworthy in comparison with this the only authoritative history.

Unless the plenary inspiration of the third Gospel be insisted on,—and this it will hardly be at the present day,—it stands to reason that its writer could not have possessed the means, even with the aid of the ‘tradition’ which he avows, of recording, ‘ipsissimis verbis,’ the conversation between the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, the beautiful ‘Magnificat’ of the latter, the ‘Benedictus’ of the aged priest Zachariah, the ‘Nunc dimittis’ of the devout Simeon; not to speak of the Proclamation of the angel to the shepherds, and the ‘Gloria in excelsis’ of the heavenly host. How attractive this legendary history must have been to the early converts is manifest from the hold these lovely poems have taken on the very soul of the Church, and the constant employment of them in its offices. But that these poems are authentic literal records of what was actually done and said, cannot be accepted as true, except on the assumption of their plenary inspiration. This third Gospel was, however, written at a time when the Jewish element still preponderated in the infant Christian Congregation; and accordingly it narrates the early history of the Messiah in a form which, whilst calculated to attract and at the same time instruct the Gentile converts who had some acquaintance with Judaism, was nevertheless in its main features in accordance with Jewish notions.

The fourth Gospel professes to be the composition of the Apostle St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved; and as that Apostle must have been an eye-witness of the events professed to be recorded in it, and as he stood in the most intimate relation to his Master, and consequently was likely to be the best exponent of his expressions and sentiments, the authority of this Gospel was universally recognized as superior to that of the other three. This claim has, however, been disputed of late years; and the more closely the subject is investigated, the more reason there is for the opinion that this Gospel is not only not the composition of its reputed author, but that it is of much later date than even the third Gospel. Indeed there are the strongest grounds for

regarding the fourth Gospel as the production of a period when the Gentile had gained the ascendancy over the Jewish element in the Christian Church, and opinions were entertained which were no longer those of the Apostles. And thus it is that the personal human history of Jesus 'the Messiah,' so prominently put forward in the third Gospel, is discarded in the fourth, and Jesus 'Christ' is represented in his spiritual character of the Son of God.

In the present work it is not intended to discuss a question that has been so ably handled by numerous scholars both on the Continent and in England. All that needs to be said here is, that it was only after much doubt and hesitation, and with the greatest pain, as being at the sacrifice of the cherished convictions of many years, that the conclusion was arrived at that, in the consideration of the personal history of the Messiah, we are bound to disregard the testimony of the document bearing the title of 'The Gospel according to St. John.' And it must be added that, as will be shown in the progress of the present work, there is reason to treat the testimony of this Gospel as of little worth in other respects likewise.

Whilst the first and second Gospels are entitled to be regarded as what they profess to be, the third and fourth Gospels may not unaptly be comprised within the two classes of legends which Dr. Arnold has defined as being 'equally remote from historical truth, but in all other respects most opposite to each other: the one imaginative but honest, playing with facts, and converting them into a wholly different form, but addressing itself also to a different part of the mind; not professing to impart exact knowledge, but to quicken and raise the perception of what is beautiful and noble; the other, tame and fraudulent, deliberately corrupting truth, in order to minister to national or individual vanity, but substituting in the place of reality the representations of interested or servile falsehood'*.

Making certain allowances, the Gospel bearing the name of St. Luke, which gives a poetical form to the life of the Messiah,

* 'History of Rome,' i. 393.

may be regarded as belonging to the former class. To the latter must be referred the fourth Gospel, which was written for the express purpose of exalting the divine nature of Jesus at the expense of his human nature, and with other objects on which it would be premature to dilate at present; its authorship having, by a ‘pious fraud’ of the Elders of the Church, been attributed to the Apostle John, in order to stamp it with his authority.

Whilst legends of various kinds grew up and spread rapidly among the early Christians, many genuine records must, on the other hand, have fallen a prey to the remorseless tooth of time, and many more, it is to be feared, were ruthlessly destroyed. The prefatory statement of the third Canonical Gospel, ‘Forasmuch as *many* have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,’ demonstrates that at the time when that document was composed and promulgated (apparently towards the end of the first century) there were extant numerous similar written histories. And as we now have only the two bearing the names of Matthew and Mark,—for the fourth Gospel is manifestly of later date than the third, as are likewise the writings known as the Apocryphal Gospels,—the reasonable inference is that those ‘many’ others have been destroyed. For it cannot be doubted that as soon as schisms arose within the bosom of the Church,—and the disputes between Paul and the other Apostles at Jerusalem demonstrate how early this was,—the dominant and self-styled orthodox party would, most properly as they conceived, have exerted themselves to root out heresy in every form; and one of the most effectual ways to do this was by suppressing all the writings of other parties that happened not to coincide with their own opinions, whether as regards facts or doctrines, and especially the latter. They had not yet come to the suppression of the writers likewise, though they did not fail to adopt this effectual means of enforcing uniformity as soon as they had it in their power to do so. A religious body possessing or exercising temporal authority can no more tolerate heresy or schism, than the civil power can permit the existence of rebellion or sedition.

Both will employ every means at their command to enforce submission and uniformity; and the experience of all ages shows that religious persecutions have ever been more uncompromising and merciless than civil ones.

It will not be out of place here to remark that the Acts of the Apostles give but a faint idea of the ‘odium theologicum’ which raged even in the time of the Apostles themselves. A striking instance of its intensity is recorded by Irenæus, who relates that Polycarp had been heard to repeat how, when on a certain occasion St. John, ‘the one of his disciples whom Jesus loved,’ and who ought to have been, if any one was, imbued with his Lord’s spirit, went to the baths at Ephesus and there happened to meet the ‘heretic’ Cerinthus, he started back and exclaimed, ‘Let us flee; for the enemy of truth is here, and the roof may fall on us.’ This statement, it must be remembered, is that of one who was a personal disciple of the Apostle, and therefore is not likely to have misrepresented his master’s language or conduct, especially as he himself followed his example. For, as is likewise recorded by Irenæus, when Polycarp was asked by Marcion, ‘Dost thou know me?’ he replied, ‘Know thee? yes; I know thee well; thou art the first-born of Satan.’ ‘So careful,’ remarks Irenæus approvingly, ‘were the Apostles and their disciples not to hold the least intercourse with such as adulterated the truth.’

If such were the sentiments and language of the Apostles of Jesus and their immediate disciples, it is only natural that the same should have served as models for their successors, among whom it appears to have been the invariable practice to regard assumed heretics and infidels as being necessarily monsters of depravity, whose moral character, therefore, they have not scrupled to blacken, and to whom they have delighted to apply the vilest epithets. ‘Orthodoxy’ seems, indeed, in all ages to have appropriated to itself vituperative language as its own peculiar. ‘Devils, Antichrists, maniacs, Jews, polytheists, atheists, dogs, wolves, lions, hares, chameleons, hydras, eels, cuttlefish, goats, beetles, leeches,’ are among the choice epithets which the orthodox Athanasius heaped on the devoted heads of his opponent Arius

and his followers. And at the present day right worthy imitators of the great champion of orthodoxy are to be found in the adherents of the infallible Pope of Rome. In a recent number of the ‘Perseveranza,’ the most moderate newspaper in Italy, it is said with truth that ‘the organs of the Church party, if not the worst and most venomous of all that appear in Italy, yield the palm to none as far as low malignity is concerned. Not a Christian word issues from the mouth of the dependants of the Vatican, and the very supposition of one would be regarded as an insult. They blaspheme and curse all who do not blaspheme and curse with them, and regard it as a sin to believe in God or in Christ, except as beings who have no end in view but that of ministering to their desires and gratifying their vengeance.’

Dean Stanley, from whose ‘Lectures on the Eastern Church’ the foregoing list of select Athanasian epithets has been copied, says, apologetically, that ‘there may be cases where such language is justifiable.’ But who is to be the judge when and where it is proper to be used? And if in any case it is justifiable on the one side, surely it must be equally so on the other; unless, indeed, those who are subjected to such abuse prove themselves by their silence to be better Christians than their revilers.

The system of suppressing heretical writings, adopted in the first ages of Christianity, like that of vilifying their authors and putting them to death whenever practicable, has unhappily continued to be that of the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church. One of the primary duties of the Holy Inquisition, established in the beginning of the thirteenth century, was to prevent the dissemination of error, that is to say, of every thing contrary to the doctrines of the Church. The efficient manner in which this duty was performed is matter of history. Its operation has, however, been most visible, though perhaps not altogether so exhaustive, in the persecution to which the works of heterodox writers have been subjected since the invention of printing. Ranke writes:—‘In the year 1543, Caraffa decreed that no book, whether new or old, and whatever its contents, should for the future be printed without permission from the Inquisition. Booksellers were enjoined to

send in a catalogue of their stock, and to sell nothing without their assent; and the officers of customs also received orders to deliver no packages, whether of printed books or manuscript, to their address without first laying them before the Inquisition. This gradually gave rise to an index of prohibited books. . . . Nor were printers and booksellers the only persons subjected to these stringent regulations; even on private persons it was enforced, as a duty of conscience, to denounce all forbidden books, and to contribute their utmost towards the destruction of all that should come to their knowledge. These laws were carried into execution with incredible success*. Books which had once been in every house were so effectually suppressed that not a single copy of them is now to be found in the most extensive libraries. One book in particular, ‘Of the Benefit of the Death of Christ,’ is noted as having experienced this fate. ‘It was written in Tuscan, was many times reprinted, and was eagerly read in every part of Italy. But the Inquisition detected in it the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. They proscribed it, and it is now as hopelessly lost as the second decade of Livy’†.

Of the unceasing operation of this system down to the present day, the following remarkable instance may be cited. A correspondent of ‘The Times’ newspaper, writing from Naples on April 24th, 1871, says:—‘In walking through the Villa [Reale, or public gardens,] at the beginning of the week, I was struck with a spectacle which I never witnessed before. The paths, especially near the Riviera, and the flower-beds, were enamelled with fragments of paper, which a man was sweeping up with a long broom. . . . Day after day the same scene presented itself in spite of incessant brooming, and on examining the fragments more minutely, I found they were printed portions of various parts of the New Testament. A few steps further on, at the end of the Villa, there were two kiosks, at one of which Bibles were sold, and at the other portions of the New Testament were distributed gratuitously. A crowd had assembled around, and each

* ‘History of the Popes’ (*tr. Foster*), i. 161.

† Macaulay’s ‘Essays.’

person was supplied with copies, and often resupplied*. The irresistible conclusion is, that many of the persons so supplied and often resupplied with copies of the New Testament were agents of the clerical party, who forthwith proceeded to destroy the same, and to scatter the fragments about in the manner described.

It is, however, far from being intended to attribute such conduct to the Church of Rome alone. The following instance serves to prove that heathens can be quite as intolerant as 'Christians.' In the island of Madagascar the first English missionaries had completed an edition of the entire Bible in the native language, before they were compelled to leave the island by the persecution to which they were subjected in 1835, under Queen Ranavalona the First. Of this edition not more than a dozen copies are now known to be in existence, so diligently were they sought out and destroyed by the Queen's orders †.

If such has been the fate of printed books of which numerous copies could be so easily made, what must not have been the effect of the like inquisitorial proceedings on the part of the dominant section of the Christian Church in times anterior to the introduction of printing, when single copies were produced only by the laborious process of writing! How little, then, are we in a position to know the true character of such writings of the earliest ages of Christianity as by the orthodox, that is to say the strongest, party were stigmatized as schismatic or heretical, and in consequence condemned and destroyed! And how much reason is there not to fear that, in frequent instances, it was not error but truth that was thus stifled and suppressed! How many 'Gospels' and how many 'Epistles' of the Apostles and their immediate successors may not be lost! Who can say, indeed, that we possess all the writings of St. Paul himself, and whether it was with the free will of the other Apostles and their immediate disciples that we enjoy those that have had the good fortune to escape, especially the First Epistle to the Corinthians?

* 'The Times' of May 2nd, 1871.

† Sibree, 'Madagascar and its People.'

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that more ample materials for a proper biography of our Lord Jesus are not extant. And yet the scanty materials that have been spared to us suffice to clear up much that is dark and imperfect in that biography, if only they are treated as they ought to have been, as eventually they must be, and as indeed they are happily beginning to be; that is to say, on purely historical grounds, like as the materials for the biography of any other historical personage are treated. Until quite recently scholars abstained from dealing with the life of Jesus after this fashion, owing apparently to the dread lest its sanctity should be violated, as if there was any thing more holy than the truth, or as if the truth could be injured by the most searching investigation. In this sense Père Hyacinthe has well expressed himself in a letter addressed to Père Gratry, whose recent recantation and submission to the Decree of Papal Infallibility is one of the most glaring scandals of the Gallican Church. His words are:—‘As for me, what I fear most is not the open and candid scepticism of the adversaries of Revelation, but the unconscious scepticism of those who place false authority and false unity above the truth. The former consolidates the sacred edifice by the very assaults that it directs against it from without; the latter silently undermines it from within by shaking the foundations on which it rests—sincerity of faith, and integrity of conscience.’

CHAPTER IV.

ON TRADITIONS AND LEGENDS.

As in the preceding chapter the third and fourth Canonical Gospels have been spoken of as legendary, it is expedient to say a few words, intended for the general reader rather than the scholar, in explanation of the correct meaning of the word

'legend,' as also of 'tradition ;' both of which terms are often employed loosely and inaccurately.

A tradition is properly that which has been 'delivered' orally, or by word of mouth, from one person to another and from one generation to another. It is correctly defined by Dryden in 'The Hind and Panther':—

'The good old bishops took a simple way ;
Each asked but what he heard his father say,
Or how he was instructed in his youth,
And by tradition's force upheld the truth.'

Or, as it is pointedly put in D'Israeli's 'Genius of Judaism,' 'A Karaite, rejecting traditions, tauntingly interrogated Hillel, the greatest of the Rabbins, on what evidence they rested. The sage, pausing for a moment, desired the sceptic would repeat the first three letters of the alphabet. This done, the advocate for traditions in his turn asked, "How do you know how to pronounce those letters in this way and no other?" "I learned them from my father," replied the Karaite. "And your son shall learn them from you," rejoined Hillel; "and this is tradition"'.*

Though the poor Karaite was posed by the sharp-witted doctor of the law, he was nevertheless not in the wrong. Mr. Alexander J. Ellis and other scholars are demonstrating that the sounds of letters are constantly changing,—that the English language is not pronounced as it was in the time of Chaucer or even later. And what tradition shall help us in determining authoritatively whether Tully's agnomen is to be pronounced 'Kikero,' 'Khikhero,' 'Shishero,' 'Tshitshero,' 'Tsitsero,' 'Sisero,' or 'Thithero'?

In fact, it may be laid down as a law that, owing to the imperfection of human nature, nothing whatever can be communicated by one person to another, with the absolute certainty of its being received precisely as it was delivered, or without a moral certainty that it will be repeated incorrectly to a third person.

* This story is repeated in somewhat different terms by Mr. Deutsch in the 'Quarterly Review,' cxliii. 441.

And the oftener a statement is thus transmitted from one to another, the greater will be the certainty of its departing more and more from its original form. We need only recall to mind the story of the three black crows! And we may appeal to the experience of domestic life to show how rarely it is that a servant delivers the most ordinary message without making a mistake of some sort.

What is here said, however, is properly to be restricted to oral traditions, or sayings delivered from one person to another by word of mouth. The moment a tradition is committed to writing it ceases to be a tradition and becomes a legend, which term is thus sarcastically defined by Horne Tooke:—‘Legend, which means “that which ought to be read,” is, from the early misapplication of the term by impostors, now used by us as if it meant “that which ought to be laughed at”’*.

It is because the tradition has become developed and distorted before it is committed to writing and so fixed as a legend, that the latter term has received its opprobrious definition and come to be regarded as almost equivalent to fable. Still, when once a tradition is committed to writing, however ‘legendary’ (in the vulgar sense) it may have previously become, it is now a record, which in itself is immutable; so that persons living many centuries later are just as competent to decide on the merits of a legend as were those who lived at the time when it was reduced to writing,—perhaps more so, on account of their living at a time and under circumstances enabling them to have access to sources of information which the recorder of the legend himself was not acquainted with. Nevertheless, the reduction of a tradition to writing, whereby it becomes fixed as a legend, does not prevent the tradition itself from being repeated orally and so transmitted traditionally, receiving some modification at each stage of its transmission, and being, perhaps, from time to time committed to writing under other circumstances, and thus giving rise to other legends of a different character.

Nor is this all; for each of these legends, although in itself

* ‘*Diversions of Purley.*’

fixed and immutable, may be repeated orally, and so become in its turn the origin of a separate tradition, or, it may be more correctly said, of various traditions, inasmuch as no two readers of the legend would repeat it in precisely the same terms to their respective auditors; and thus it might go on, as it were, 'ad infinitum.'

Though a legend,—using the term in its literal sense as meaning any written document,—when once it is recorded, is thereby freed from the influences of oral tradition, and becomes in itself immutable, still, when of ancient date, it is rarely handed down to us absolutely in the form in which it was originally committed to writing. For instance, it will not be pretended by any one that the original manuscripts of the Scriptures, either of the Old or of the New Testament, have been preserved. We possess them only in the form of written copies, which themselves are doubtless copies of other copies, the originals having been lost long ago. Hence errors, which scarcely any care could prevent, have unavoidably found their way into the copies now extant, not only of the Gospels but of all the other writings of the New Testament. The Jewish Masorites have done their best to preserve the writings of the Old Testament in their integrity; but, even in this case, their elaborate system of authenticating their written copies was not introduced till long after the text had already experienced many departures from its original purity.

But independently of this source of error, there can be no guarantee against a still more fruitful one, namely, the introduction into the text of manuscripts of the marginal notes and glosses of readers and commentators. These have mostly got accidentally incorporated into the text by copyists; but not unfrequently they have been intentionally interpolated, and so made to appear to be portions of the original text. As an instance of the former may be adduced the doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew vi. 13, 'For thine is the kingdom' &c., which is an adaptation of David's words in 1 Chr. xxix. 11, added to the prayer in its original form, as given in Luke xi. 4,

from its having been said after the prayer, in like manner as in Catholic Churches the doxology ‘Glory be to the Father’ &c. is repeated after each of the Psalms of David. And though this latter has not been introduced into the printed copies of the Psalter, we find it in the Book of Common Prayer of the Established Church of England added to the ninety-fifth Psalm in the Morning Service, and to other Psalms and portions of Scripture, without any mark to distinguish it from the context. Now nothing would have been more natural than that the ignorant priests in the early ages of Christianity should have insisted on inserting the Doxology at the end of the Lord’s Prayer in the first Gospel, because they so found it in their missals, or elsewhere. And supposing it possible for the Psalter to be lost, and that it had to be reconstructed from the fragments existing in various quarters, there are at the present day many priests of the same calibre, who might contend that the ‘Gloria Patri’ should be inserted as forming a portion of the Psalms of David in their original form.

Of the interpolations purposely introduced into the Scriptures of the New Testament, the most notorious and best-established one is perhaps that in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of John, ‘For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one;’ where the words between brackets have been introduced by the Romish clergy at a comparatively recent date, they being wanting in all Greek manuscripts and early versions in other languages. So, too, in the concluding portion of the first Gospel, the words attributed to our Lord Jesus, ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’*, though they appear in all the manuscripts extant, must have been added after the passages in Acts ii. 38, x. 48, xix. 5, &c. were written. For it is not to be imagined that the Apostles would have acted in direct violation of their

* Matth. xxviii. 19.

Master's command, and baptized all their converts 'into the name of the Lord Jesus' alone, had they only just received from him the express injunction to baptize them in the name of the Trinity.

The treatment which many, perhaps all, of the original manuscripts of the Canonical Scriptures of the New Testament experienced at the hands of the Fathers of the Early Church may be illustrated by that to which the early English ballads were subjected by their compiler and editor, Bishop Percy. That otherwise conscientious man arbitrarily altered the manuscripts which came into his hands in such a manner as to leave the readers of the poems he gave to the world as antiques quite in the dark as to what parts of them were really ancient and what parts were mock-antiques of his own. And these hybrid compositions were to serve, and in fact have served, as sources of information and as models to our modern poets! As regards one of the poems, 'Sir Cauline,' the Bishop complacently avows that, as it appeared to fall short of the perfection it seemed to deserve, 'he was tempted to add several stanzas in the first part, and still more in the second, so as to connect and complete the story in the manner which appeared to him most interesting and affecting,'—his object being 'to please both the judicious antiquary and the reader of taste,' and his endeavour 'to gratify both without offending either.' If such tampering with original documents was deemed not only venial, but even justifiable, by a prelate of the Established Church of England, in order to meet the requirements of a 'polished age,' like that in which he lived, it will certainly not be judging human nature too harshly to suppose that, in the ages immediately following that in which our Lord lived, that prelate's predecessors may in like manner have sought to please both the 'judicious (Jewish) antiquary' and the Greek or Roman 'reader of taste,' by altering the Sacred History so as to 'gratify both without offending either.'

In spite of the Apostle Paul's warning, the maxim has always prevailed in the Church—that is to say, among the clergy—that

pious frauds are allowable, nay commendable, when done ‘ad majorem Dei gloriam’—for the greater glory of God; and there can be no doubt that this fraudulent system prevailed to a frightful extent among the Fathers of the Christian Church. In saying this, it is not meant to impute any specially evil intentions to them in particular. They were generally pious, well-intentioned men; but they were men like ourselves, and they had a cause to serve, which they felt it to be their bounden duty to advance by every means in their power. Hence there is no reason whatever to regard them as incapable of palming off on their ignorant, superstitious, and credulous flocks just such palpable fictions as have been invented and promulgated down to the present day, and are defended, nay insisted on, by divines of the highest position in the Church, in other respects liberal and enlightened men, who would feel aggrieved if they were thought not to be devout and sincere Christians, but whose piety, it is to be feared, is after all much on a par with that which inspired the prayer of Leicester and his confederates in Sheridan’s famous play, ‘The Critic’:—

‘O mighty Mars!
Behold thy votaries submissive beg,
That thou wilt deign to grant them all they ask,
And sanctify whatever means they use
To gain it.’

It may be objected by simple-minded professors of Christianity, that it is not possible for the true religion to have spread itself as it has over the world by means of such a system of fraud and imposture. But this they can only say in ignorance of the laws that regulate the spread of religion, and indeed of all other opinions, the reception of which by the masses of mankind is generally far from being dependent on their truth or falsehood. Were it otherwise, a plebiscitum of the whole human race would soon settle the question as to which is the true religion. The actual result, when placed in the form of a return of the poll after an election, may surprise those who fancy that the truth must at once prevail as a matter of course. That it

will prevail eventually there can be no doubt; but the time of its accomplishment is in the hands of the God of Truth alone.

In the following return-list, the Roman Catholics, as being the votaries of the 'Mother of God' (and it might be added of the various saints likewise) more than of the Son, or even the Father, are entered as giving their votes for 'Mary.' The Orthodox Greeks shall be classed with them. Protestants are entered as voting for 'Christ,' Jews for 'Jehovah,' Mohammedans for 'Allah.' The Polytheists of Asia are returned as voting for 'Buddha' and 'Brahma' respectively. The votes of other heathens, principally Africans, have to be recorded as blank or informal. The numbers given may not be quite correct, but they are sufficiently so for the purpose required.

Buddha	350 millions.
Brahma	250 "
Mary	245 "
Allah	160 "
Christ	90 "
Jehovah	5 "
Blank and informal votes	200
	—
	1300 "

So that Buddha, or Sakya-Muni, has a preponderating majority, his followers comprising more than one quarter of the human race, and exceeding all the Christian sects put together! If two candidates had to be returned, the colleague of Buddha would be Brahma (the two together polling nearly half the world!), though between the latter and Mary it is almost a tie. It is seen Who is at the bottom of the poll, just as Truth is said to be at the bottom of a well! And the result but too plainly shows that, as regards religious faith at all events, 'vox populi' is not 'vox Dei.'

It may be rejoined, that the early professors of Christianity gave the most convincing proof of the truth of their religion by suffering death or the most cruel tortures rather than renounce it. But those who rely on such an argument should bear in mind

that the testimony of the confessors and martyrs of the first century, at Rome and elsewhere, is of no greater intrinsic value as evidence than that of their followers and imitators in the second and third centuries, or at any later period. Their self-sacrifice demonstrates the sincerity of their belief, but that is all ; it is no sure evidence of the facts on which that belief was founded. On the contrary, how many martyrs have there not been for various differences of belief, and even for totally different religions ! The ancient Romans slaughtered the early Christians ; and the modern Romans in Italy, Spain, and France have murdered Jews, Mohammedans, Albigenses, Huguenots, and other ‘heretics,’—every one, in fact, that was not an ‘orthodox’ Christian. And here in England, the Roman Catholics have burned the Protestants, and the Protestants the Roman Catholics. Which of these various ‘armies of martyrs’ did not die in the firm conviction that they suffered for the truth ? And which of the persecuting parties did not believe that they were acting for the greater glory of God ? For the heathens were convinced that they were performing an acceptable service to their deities, quite as fully as the Christians believed they were pleasing the All-merciful God by offering up to Him their human sacrifices !

Reverting to the origin of traditions and legends, it has to be remarked that, notwithstanding the prevalence of what are commonly called gratuitous falsehoods, it may be questioned whether an error can ever obtain general adoption unless it has some foundation of truth, however slight that foundation may be, and however much the truth may have been tampered with and perverted. It is a homely proverb that ‘there is no smoke without fire ;’ and if this is not always true in the sense in which it is usually understood,—namely, that there must necessarily be some foundation for what is not unfrequently the falsest of accusations,—it is true enough, nevertheless, if that foundation be looked for in appearances, or in the motive for making such accusation.

Truths, when presented to the generality of persons in an ab-

stract form, fail to make the same impression on their minds as when placed before them in the concrete. In this instance, as in most others, example is better than precept. The following anecdote is therefore given in illustration of what has just been asserted.

All who have read Sir Walter Scott's novel 'Kenilworth' will remember the life-like scene at the Black Bear Inn at Cumnor, kept by Giles Gostling, with which the tale opens. The whole incident, like most of those in that highly interesting but most unhistorical romance, is pure fiction. That there was a village inn of some sort at Cumnor in the time of Scott's heroine, Amy Robsart, is most probable, and that one existed there when 'Kenilworth' was written is certain; though whether it was the same house, or bore the same sign at both periods, may not now be ascertainable. But that the sign was not the 'Black Bear,' or any thing like it, is an undisputable fact, as may indeed be inferred from the suggestive note of the author of the novel, in the edition published in 1831, that 'The jolly "Black Bear" has been restored to his predominance over bottle and bowl in the village of Cumnor.'

How this 'restoration' was brought about of what had previously no existence, except in the imagination of the novelist, is deserving of being related, as showing plainly how local 'traditions' often originate, and also because it is believed that the precise particulars have never been made known to the public*.

On the first appearance of 'Kenilworth,' in the year 1821, some undergraduates of the University of Oxford, from which city Cumnor is distant about three miles, had a signboard painted with a representation of the 'Bear and Ragged Staff,' the badge of the noble family of Neville, which had been wrongfully assumed as his own by the upstart Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the hero of Scott's novel; and this signboard they took to Cumnor, where they had no great difficulty in inducing

* The statement in 'Notes and Queries,' 3rd ser. v. 439, does not give all the details.

the landlord of the village inn, to substitute it for the ‘Red Lion’ or ‘White Hart,’ or whatever may have been the sign the house then bore. And, accordingly, the ‘Bear and Ragged Staff, by John Busby, late Giles Gostling,’ now flourishes at Cumnor; whither all inquisitive tourists, desirous of becoming acquainted with the scene of the stirring incidents conjured up by the great magician, may go, and, as Mr. J. O. Halliwell wrote in ‘The Times’ of June 16th, 1847, ‘Mine host of the Black Bear* will tell you of unfortunate Amy, and speak of the evil doings of Tony Foster so “traditionally,” that were we not aware the attractive sign had only been hoisted a few years ago, and that the epitaph in the church tells a very different tale to that related by the novelist, we might imagine “Kenilworth” to have been strictly founded on the traditions of the village.’

The legendary history of the Abbotsford bantling has of late received a further development. In a work published only five years ago †, it is said, ‘The Bear and Ragged Staff is still the sign of an inn at Cumnor, to which an historic interest is attached, owing to its connexion with the dark tragedy of poor Amy Robsart, who, in this very house, fell a victim to that stony-hearted adventurer, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Sir Walter Scott has introduced the house in the first chapter of “Kenilworth.” The power the Warwick family once enjoyed gave this sign a popularity which has existed to the present day; though the race of old Nevil, and the kings he made and unmade, have each and all passed away.’ And so this sign of the village inn, which did not come into existence till the year 1821, in consequence of Scott’s fiction placing it in the time of Queen Elizabeth, is now in sober seriousness thrown back to the age of the Plantagenets!

In this we have an instance of the pretended restoration of what in truth never existed. The following is more curious, as

* The actual sign is not the ‘Black Bear,’ but the ‘Bear and Ragged Staff.’

† ‘The History of Signboards,’ by Jacob Larwood and John Camden Hotten.

being an instance of the actual restoration of a local tradition which had been lost during ages.

In a work recently published*, Dr. Beke relates how he conceives that 'as the Jews during their captivity beyond the Euphrates became acquainted with the celebrated city of Haran, in Mesopotamia, they fell into the error of imagining this to be Harran, in Aram Naharaim, where Terah and his family took up their residence on quitting Ur Casdim, and whence Abram was called†;' whereas, he says, 'as I pointed out in my "Origines Bibliae" seven and thirty years ago, and as I have since demonstrated by my journey thither, accompanied by my wife, at the end of 1861, the true Harran of the Patriarchs is a village near Damascus, still bearing the same name, and situated between the two rivers of Syria, namely, the Abana and Pharpar of 2 Kings, v. 12.' And he goes on to describe how, when at Harran, they discovered a very ancient well, which they 'named "Rebekah's well," as being, in their opinion, that at which the daughter of Bethuel was met by Abraham's steward‡, and as having at that time no designation whatever.' Notwithstanding this, Capt. Burton, our Consul at Damascus, reported a short time ago, 'I have known the Harran well to be called "Abraham's Well" by many Syrian Moslems, who have visited Harran, and who certainly never heard of Dr. Beke's visit to it in 1861.' To which this traveller has replied, in his said work, 'Nothing is more certain than that at that time not even the inhabitants of Harran themselves had given any such name to their well, or indeed entertained the remotest idea that their village had the honour of having once been the residence of El Khalil—the Friend of God. They appear, however, to have gladly availed themselves of my suggestion: the "tradition" was immediately set on foot; and we learn from Capt. Burton's statement that it has spread to the city of Damascus—and this all within nine years!'

A third instance shall be given, showing how a legend has

* 'The Idol in Horeb.' † Gen. xi. 31; xii. 1.

‡ Gen. xxiv. 10-20.

originated in an ignorant attempt to account for an emblem, of which the meaning was not understood.

In the park at Weimar, writes Mr. G. H. Lewes, ‘stands a stone monument, interesting as a witness to the growth of a mythos. It is an antique column, four feet high, round which a serpent winds, in the act of devouring the offering-cakes on the top. The inscription says, “*Genio Loci*.” But the Weimar plebs, disregarding antique symbols, and imperfectly acquainted with Virgil, has a legend to tell ; a legend sprung, no one knows whence, rapid and mysterious as the growth of fungi, like most legends, to satisfy the imperious craving for explanations ; a legend which certifies how, formerly, a huge serpent dwelt in this spot, the terror of Weimar, until a cunning baker bethought him of placing poisoned cakes within the monster’s reach ; and when the greedy ignorance of the serpent had relieved Weimar of the monster, a grateful people erected this monument to an energetic and inventive baker. *Et voilà ; comme on écrit l’histoire*’*.

In these three several instances the origin of the ‘tradition’ is positively within man’s memory : in that of ‘Abraham’s Well’ at Harran it actually dates back from only ten years from the present time ! By bearing in mind such clearly authenticated facts, an idea may be formed of the very brief period of time required for the origination and growth of local ‘traditions,’ which ‘the oldest inhabitant’ will soon be ready to vouch for as being of indefinite antiquity, and which then serve as the foundation for legendary histories. And thus it will be seen in how very short a time the maxim of the Romish Church, that ‘*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus, creditum est*’ must necessarily be true, may be made applicable in such cases as those of the Holy House at Nazareth—with its duplicate at Loreto—where the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary ; the Holy Grotto at Bethlehem, where Jesus was born ; ‘Mount’ Calvary at Jerusalem, where he was crucified ; the Holy Sepulchre there, where he was buried ; with all the other ‘holy’ sites that have been imposed

* ‘Life of Goethe.’

by a crafty and greedy priesthood on the ignorance and credulity of the superstitious laity.

CHAPTER V.

THE NAME AND TITLE OF JESUS THE MESSIAH.

ACCORDING to an opinion very prevalent at the present day, there was nothing supernatural in the life and mission of ‘Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.’ He was simply a young man of promise, popular among those that knew him, and ‘appearing’ to enjoy the Divine favour, the founder of a new school, the teacher of a system of ethics, which was not based on any religious belief, but was able to subsist and to spread itself without any such foundation,—a moral system far transcending those of all the schools of antiquity, with which however, somewhat inconsistently, it is regarded as being identical in its fundamental principles, and to which indeed it is supposed to be indebted in no small degree for those very principles. It was in this capacity alone that Jesus is imagined to have originated the society of persons of all nations known by the name of Christians, who are called on to practice the system of morals thus taught by him, and thereby to realize on earth the kingdom of heaven, which he and his disciples preached, without however its having any thing to do with a heaven apart from the earth.

It is scarcely necessary to say that notions such as these are totally inadequate to satisfy the wants of believers in Revelation, who have been taught to look upon our Lord Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ, of the promised seed of Abraham, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed, and upon the Christian Dispensation as the fulfilment of the Law, the accomplishment

of prophecy, and an essential element of God's general scheme for the regeneration and salvation of mankind.

Even if such notions of the character of Jesus be regarded from a lower point of view, they will be seen to be diametrically opposed to the whole tenour of the history of the Jewish people, of which that of Jesus himself forms only a part, and from which it is against every principle of true criticism to attempt to detach it, by isolating it and treating it as if it were the history of any ordinary man. To think of discussing the history of Jesus Christ, that is to say, Jesus, *the* Christ or Messiah, the Anointed King of Israel,—for such is the literal meaning of his designation,—without having special regard to the relation in which he stood to those to whom in the first instance his mission was addressed, and without alluding to the peculiar character in which he appeared on earth, would be to imitate the playhouse manager, who announced the performance of Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, with the part of Hamlet left out by particular desire.

Pious readers must not be shocked at this seeming levity when treating of a sacred subject. Why should not a homely simile be used when it is apposite and strikes home? Our Lord himself was in the habit of making use of the homeliest similes. Did he not compare the kingdom of heaven unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened?* Could any thing be more homely, and at the same time more impressive, on account of its very homeliness? The Imitation of Christ is inculcated by preachers in the pulpit, and in the writings of divines, especially in the celebrated work bearing the name of Thomas à Kempis. Why should we not imitate our Lord in his method of teaching by concrete examples and by simple figures of speech intelligible to the masses, rather than by abstract precepts and abstruse doctrines, that make little if any impression on the minds of humble hearers, and are often not altogether intelligible even to the educated.

In the present investigation of the history of our Lord Jesus,

* Matthew xiii. 33; Luke xiii. 21.

it is especially intended to regard him in the character in which he represented himself to the world, namely, that of the Messiah or Christ of prophecy. Any other method could not but be partial and one-sided; and, as preliminary to that history, it is essential to inquire into the meaning of the distinctive appellation ‘Jesus Christ,’ by which our Lord is generally known.

Now it is perfectly well understood, though it is not usually borne in mind, that this appellation, ‘Jesus Christ,’ is not itself a proper name. It is ‘Jesus,’ alone that is our Lord’s name, this being the Latin form, derived through the Greek, of the Hebrew יְהוָה, a man’s name common among the Israelites. It was borne by Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses’s lieutenant and successor, and at a later period by Jeshua, the high-priest, who was associated with Zerubbabel in the building of the second temple. The signification of this name, which in each case is rendered Ἰησοῦς, both in the Septuagint Greek version and by the Jewish historian Josephus, and is likewise the form in which our Lord’s name appears in the New Testament, is ‘a Saviour.’

On the other hand, the designation ‘Christ’ is a translation, also through the Greek, of the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ, from the verb מָשִׁיחַ, ‘to anoint;’ מֶשֶׁךְ מָשִׁיחַ, ‘the Anointed of Jehovah,’ being the designation of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, of whom Jesus was the successor, from their consecration with the sacred anointing oil of the tabernacle, prepared after the manner commanded to Moses in the thirtieth chapter of the book of Exodus. This title is familiar to us under the form of ‘Messiah,’ its literal translation into Greek being Χριστός, from the verb χρίω, ‘to anoint.’ In the Septuagint Greek version, the title of the Messiah is rendered ὁ Χριστός Κύριος, ‘the Lord’s Anointed,’ under which designation the great Deliverer of Israel, predicted by the prophets and expected by his people, was generally known.

From the Greek Χριστός the Latins obtained their ‘Christus,’ and we our ‘Christ,’ which, it is thus seen, is not a proper name at all, but a descriptive epithet applied to Jesus; the name

* 1 Sam. x. 1; xvi. 1, 6, 13.

'Jesus Christ,' by which our Lord is generally known, or more correctly 'Jesus the Christ,' being simply our English rendering of the Greek translation of the Jewish 'Joshua or Jeshua—or more properly Ieshua or Iesua—the Messiah,' that is to say, 'Jesus the Anointed' king of prophecy.

It might seem scarcely necessary to explain that the denomination 'Christians,' applied to and adopted by the believers in our Lord Jesus, is simply expressive of their being his followers, and that it signifies 'ex vi termini' their belief in him as the promised Messiah or Christ. Nevertheless, this explanation is requisite; for, strange as it may appear, this simple and patent meaning of the word has been open to question; and, more strangely still, it has been totally misunderstood and misinterpreted, not merely in the earliest ages of the Church, but even down to the present day.

But before exposing the abuse of the term, it must be shown how and when it came into use.

In the eleventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, after relating how Paul (then called Saul) and Barnabas went to Antioch, and there during a whole year assembled themselves with the 'Church,' and taught much people, it is said that 'the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch' *. Whether they called themselves so or were called so by others, is not stated; but there ought not to be any doubt on the subject, although the question has been decided in different senses.

Though the appellation, as used by Christians, is unquestionably in itself an implied confession of faith, it is not likely that it was spontaneously assumed by the first believers in Christ themselves. On the contrary, there is evidence that the epithets they ordinarily employed, when speaking of themselves or one another, were 'brethren,' 'disciples,' 'believers,' 'saints,' the 'elect,' or 'called.' The name of 'Christians' must consequently have been in the first instance given to them by others, though it may afterwards have been readily adopted by themselves. We witness a similar process in the case of all newly formed sects, except

* Acts xi. 26.

where the name attached to them by others is a nickname, opprobrious, derisive, or contemptuous. For instance, the 'Friends' of the present day are commonly known as 'Quakers'; but naturally they do not themselves employ this designation unless when compelled to do so in the Civil Courts. But it is different in the case of the 'Methodists,' who, in the early part of the eighteenth century, were a little company of devout young men, members of the University of Oxford, who lived by rule or method, and were in consequence called 'Methodists' by their more worldly-minded companions, not ill-naturedly perhaps, but with a certain tinge of pity or contempt on account of their eccentricity. Still, as there was nothing really offensive in this nickname,—for such it really was,—it was readily accepted as a distinctive and even honorary designation by the Methodists themselves, among whom the two Wesleys and Whitefield became the leaders; and to this day it is proudly retained by their successors, the majority of them, who belong to the separate 'Church' established by John Wesley, distinguishing themselves, yet further by the (to them honorary) designation of 'Wesleyan Methodists.'

As regards the primitive Christians, it remains to be seen by whom this name was attached to them. Now it is certain that it could not have originated with the Jews, that is to say the bulk of the nation, who did not participate in the belief of the Messianites, and consequently would never have employed a term which might be understood to be an acknowledgment on their part of Jesus as the Messiah. Besides which, the word *Xp̄iōtēs*, being Greek, would not have been employed by the countrymen of Jesus, who spoke the Jewish language of the period. And in fact history tells us that the followers of Jesus were called by the Jews Nazarenes or Galileans,—contemptuously perhaps, but not necessarily so, inasmuch as our Lord was truly a native of Nazareth in Galilee. And to this day the former of these designations, under the form of 'Nasarani,' continues to be used by the Mohammedans, and by the Jews likewise, if indeed they do not indulge in some more opprobrious epithet, when speaking of Christians.

As to the notion that the distinctive appellation of the disciples of Jesus was formally changed from ‘Nazarenes’ and ‘Galileans’ to ‘Christians’ by Evodius, Bishop of Antioch, at a synod held there for that purpose, it may be dismissed as an absurd idle fable. The believers in our Lord never applied to themselves either of those terms, and therefore never had occasion to change them.

Seeing, then, that the name did not originate with the Christians themselves, nor with the Jews, it can only have had its origin among the Gentiles or heathen Greeks. Yet it does not follow, as is generally supposed, that it was employed by them offensively or derisively. On the contrary, they used it, in the simplest and most natural manner, to designate the followers of Jesus; only the fact of their having called those followers ‘Christians,’—meaning ‘Messianites,’—instead of ‘Jesuians’ or ‘Jesuites,’ after his name, reveals another fact pregnant with significance.

It was at Antioch, as we read in the Acts*, that the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians, apparently in the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Claudius. By Suetonius it is also recorded that at about the same time this Emperor ‘banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrēstus’†. These two statements establish the fact that the first Jewish disciples of our Lord were, as is most natural, in the habit of speaking of him, not under his proper name, Jesus, but as the Messiah or ‘Christ’—the Lord’s Anointed: in fact Paul did not preach Jesus, but *Xριστόν ἐσταυρωμένον*, ‘a crucified Messiah’‡. But the statement of the Roman historian proves something more, namely, that the disturbances among the Jews residing in Rome, which are alleged to have taken place ‘at the instigation of one Chrēstus,’ were in fact, like those at Iconium §, at Thessalonica ||, at Corinth ¶, and elsewhere, caused by disputes among them as to whether the person put to death by Pilate was or was not the Messiah or ‘Christus’ of prophecy; and that the Emperor Claudius, unlike his deputy Gallio, who

* Acts xi. 26–28. † See above, Chapter III. page 25. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 23.

§ Acts xiv. 4–6. || Acts xvii. 5–8. ¶ Acts xviii. 12–17.

'cared for none of these things,' summarily put an end to these disturbances by banishing from Rome all the Jews, both those who believed and those who did not believe that Jesus was the anointed King of Israel.

Hence we may draw the most important conclusion that it was not as a young man of promise named Jesus, but as the Messiah or Christ of prophecy, that our Lord was known from the outset among his countrymen, and, through them, to the Gentile Greeks and Romans. And as the latter had no conception of the meaning of this designation, as is proved by its being written 'Chrēstus' by Suetonius, they naturally supposed this our Lord's peculiar and distinctive title to be his proper name. And thus it was that, as a matter of course, they made use of the term *Xρισταῖοι* or *Xρησταῖοι* to designate the followers or partisans of the leader known to them as Christus or Chrēstus, just as they spoke of the partisans of Cæsar, Pompey, Herod, as Cæsarians, Pompeians, Herodians, and as at the present day we speak of Mohammedans, Lutherans, Swendenborgians, Wesleyans, not at all in an offensive, but simply in a distinctive literal sense. And as the designation was not offensive, it was adopted by the Greek and Roman believers in the Messiah as readily as the title of Methodists has been assumed by the followers of the Wesleys and Whitefield.

As, however, the faith in the Messiah extended itself among the Gentiles, the appellation of Christians adopted by them soon lost its primary signification. What could they be expected to know about 'Christus' as meaning the Messiah? They had been expressly exempted from circumcision and the observance of the ceremonial law of Moses*, and they cannot be supposed to have known much, if any thing, of the language, the history, or the peculiar manners and customs of the Jews. They would have seen and understood matters and interpreted them much in the same way as the same had presented themselves to their minds previously to their conversion; and consequently it is not at all surprising that they should have fallen into grievous errors. What conceivable idea could such converted heathens have had of the

* Acts xv. 19-29.

Christ—or ‘Christ,’ as they soon learned to call him—in his character of the restorer of the kingdom of his ancestor David, either temporally or spiritually? and indeed what would they have cared for him in that character? If, as St. Paul truly says, the idea of a crucified Messiah was to the Jews a stumbling-block, that to the Gentiles of a king who expressly declared his kingdom to be not of this world, and who, therefore, according to their notions, was no king at all, must indeed have been ‘foolishness’—the height of absurdity. A remark made by Dr. Norman Macleod respecting the pagan Hindoos at the present day applies ‘totidem verbis’ to the Gentile Greeks and Romans of the Apostolic age, and indeed to heathen converts everywhere and in all ages. His words are, ‘Investigations as to the alleged facts of historical Christianity do not interest a Bengalee, if indeed he is capable of making them’*. And as it is natural to all men at all times to seek within their own native language for the direct literal signification of an expression derived from a foreign one, of which they do not understand the true etymology, the name *Xpιστιανοι* was corrupted, as Tertullian and Lactantius state it was, to *Xρηστι-ανοι*, ‘Chrēstiani,’ from the adjective *χρηστός*, of which the meaning is ‘good,’ ‘honest,’ ‘upright’; and this meaning being perfectly applicable to the character of ‘Christ,’ as they understood it, they ignorantly imagined it to be the right one, and ‘Chrēstus’ to be the correct form of our Lord’s name, so entirely had they lost all knowledge of *the* Christ, or Messiah! The heathen historian Suetonius had fallen into the same error long before them; but in his case the mistake was venial.

At the present day the name ‘Christian’ is by many defined to be, not a believer in the Lord Jesus in his character of the Messiah or Christ, but ‘a follower of the example of Christ,’ the founder of a new school of morals, whose maxims are not only to be adopted and enforced, but whose personal example ought to be imitated. No one would think of denying that our Lord set an example in his life and doctrine, which it is the bounden duty of every one who professes to be and calls himself a

* ‘Peeps at the Far East.’

Christian to attempt to imitate and follow; but to pretend and to teach that this appellation means merely a follower of Christ's example,—which is what Paul meant when he said 'The Messiah liveth in me'*,—without insisting first and foremost, as Paul did, on the belief in Jesus as the Messiah or Christ of prophecy, is to unsettle the foundations of the Christian Dispensation, with the intention (it is to be feared) of doing away with its special character and merits altogether, and setting it up as a mere human system of ethics like those of Socrates, Epictetus, and other sages of Heathendom.

This discussion of the subject of our Lord's name and title and of that of his followers would be incomplete were it not accompanied by a special consideration of the remarkable passage in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts, where King Herod Agrippa is made to say to St. Paul 'almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'

In the first place, it has to be remarked that though the believers in Jesus may have been called Christians in the Greek city of Antioch in the time of Paul and Barnabas, it is not at all likely that at that early period they had received that appellation in Judæa, even among the believers themselves, and certainly not from the unbelieving Jews. Consequently the words put by the writer of the Acts into the mouth of the Jewish King cannot well have been used by him precisely as they stand. By this it is not intended to impugn the substantial truth of the narrative of the interview between Agrippa and Paul, which bears the impress of reality; but merely to question the correctness of the terms in which the incidents of that interview are recorded by the Gentile writer of the Acts of the Apostles. The whole narrative is deserving of analysis. King Herod Agrippa and his wife Berenice having come to visit the Roman Governor, Porcius Festus, at Cæsarea, where Paul was a prisoner, Festus made the king acquainted with the charge brought against the Apostle by the Jews, which he confessed his own inability to judge; inasmuch as the Jews did not accuse the prisoner of such things as

* Gal. ii. 20.

he, Festus, had supposed,—that is to say, some ‘matter of wrong or wicked lewdness’ within his competency as the military and civil governor of Judæa,—but ‘had certain questions against him of their own superstition; and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive’*. Now, though Festus might have spoken to the Jews themselves as freely as Gallio had spoken to their co-religionists a short time previously†, it is not to be imagined that in addressing their king, puppet as he was, he would have spoken of ‘their own superstition,’ or even perhaps that he would have spoken of ‘the Jews’ to one of themselves.

Further, when Paul was brought before the Jewish prince, he is stated to have said, ‘I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews.’ But he could hardly have made use of such an expression, because both himself and his hearer were of the same faith; so that he would have employed some such term as ‘our people,’ ‘our co-religionists,’ ‘the priests;’ or, if he had been a rash man, which Paul with all his zeal was not, he might have spoken of ‘unbelievers,’ ‘oppressors,’ but certainly not of ‘Jews.’

The Apostle then explained how he had, in the first instance, opposed and persecuted the believers in Jesus; how he had been caused to see the error of his ways by the miraculous vision at Damascus; and how, ‘Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that the Messiah should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people [i. e. the Jews] and to the Gentiles’‡. And as he thus spoke for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, ‘Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.’ To the heathen Roman governor Paul’s words must indeed have been incomprehensible, may well have savoured of madness. But to this Paul replied, ‘I am not

* Acts xxv. 19.

† Acts xviii. 14, 15.

‡ Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely ; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him ; for this thing was not done in a corner.' And then, turning to the Jewish prince, he made this passionate appeal to him :—' King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest ;'—his meaning being, ' If thou believest the prophets, as I know thou dost, thou must necessarily believe that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by them.' To this Agrippa replied, ' Almost'—or ' shortly,' or ' easily,' the literal signification of the expression *ἐν ὅλῃ γε* being of no consequence whatever,—' thou persuadest (or wilt persuade) me that Jesus is the Messiah,' or ' that the Messiah is really come ;' which expression a subsequent Gentile Christian narrator might well represent concretely by the words ' to be a Christian,' though assuredly no such words could possibly have issued from the lips of one Jew speaking to another at that early period.

It has been conjectured by some scholars that Agrippa's reply is to be understood as having been made ironically or disparagingly ; but the whole interview, as recorded, was evidently a serious one, and the result shows that the Jewish king was favourably disposed towards Paul, even though he may not have been convinced by him.

In conclusion, it must be repeated that 'Christ' is not the proper name of our Lord, but his peculiar distinctive title ; and that the use of the word, either alone or in conjunction with 'Jesus,' without the addition of the definite article, so as to read 'Christ,' or 'Jesus Christ,' however sanctioned by the practice of ages, is as incorrect as is that of the expression 'John Baptist' in the authorized version of Matthew, xiv. 8, and leads to very great misapprehension. And, further, that to suppose the designation 'Christian' to mean merely 'a follower of Christ's example,' is much the same as if it were said that 'Royalist' means a follower of Queen Victoria's example, or 'Imperialist' an imitator of the ex-Emperor Napoleon. It cannot be too firmly held in remembrance that a Christian—literally a Messianite—is one

who believes that our Lord Jesus was, is, and is to be the Messiah, Christ, or Anointed King of prophecy, the promised seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Those who do not entertain this belief may call themselves Jesuites or Jesuans, but they have no right to the designation of Christians.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LINEAGE AND BIRTH-PLACE OF JESUS.

WHATEVER differences of opinion may have existed among the early Christians respecting the spiritual character of the Messiah and his kingdom, the whole tenour of the Gospel history demonstrates that Jesus of Nazareth was looked upon by them as the son of David after the flesh, and accordingly the avowed object of the two genealogies in the first and third Gospels is to set forth his lineal descent from that monarch.

Those genealogies are, on the face of them, open to grave objections, and they have in consequence been deemed unworthy of credit by many scholars of unquestionable ability. An ingenious attempt has been made by the present Bishop of Bath and Wells (Lord Alfred Hervey)* to reconcile the two, by contending that the one in the first Gospel gives the royal descent of Jesus, through the several heirs to the throne of David, and that the other, in the third Gospel, traces his natural descent from father to son. Thus, on the death of King Jehoiachin childless, Salathiel, the son of Neri, the Rhesa (Prince), who was the father of Zerubbabel, became the legitimate heir to the throne ; whilst, in like manner, Joseph, the son and natural heir of Heli, was the legitimate successor to the throne on the death of his uncle Jacob without issue.

* 'Genealogies of our Lord.'

It might be objected that, according to the strict wording of the two pedigrees,—that in Matthew's gospel being that ‘Jacob begat Joseph,’ and that in Luke's being that ‘Joseph was the (legal heir or presumptive) son of Heli,’—the conclusion ought rather to be that the former gives the natural, and the latter the regal descent of Jesus. Still nothing really depends on this, if the fact only be that Jesus was, or even in general estimation was deemed to be, of the royal house of David.

These pedigrees may therefore be laid aside, in order to controvert the assertion made on general grounds by many critics, and especially by M. Renan, that Jesus had no right whatever to be considered the son of David, and that the attributing of this designation to him was an ‘innocent fraud,’—in which the French critic courteously concedes that Jesus himself may, ‘perhaps,’ have had no hand*,—for that the family of David had long been extinct; otherwise the representatives of that family would not have failed to take part in the great disputes of that period, as did the Sadokians (Sadducees), the Boethusians, the Asmoneans, and others.

Now this is a purely gratuitous assumption. It may be quite true that at the time of the Messiah's advent the family of David had altogether lost its royal rank, and sunk into political and even social insignificance. Yet it does not follow that the family had become extinct. And as long as any scions of it continued in existence, there is really no good reason for supposing them to have lost the knowledge of their illustrious descent.

It is an historical fact that, at the time of the return of the Jews from Babylon, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, prince of the tribe of Judah, and Jeshua, high priest of the tribe of Levi, the genealogies of numerous families of those two tribes, and also of that of Benjamin, had been carefully preserved. From that time till the birth of Jesus was a period of only five hundred years, within which comparatively short interval it is hardly conceivable that the genealogy of the first family of the nation, that of David, should have become lost, especially as we know other

* ‘Vie de Jesus’ (9th edit.), Paris, 1863, p. 139.

families of much lower degree to have preserved their pedigrees. Saul of Tarsus, for example, asserted, as if it were an indisputable fact, that he was of the tribe of Benjamin ; and the historian Josephus claimed to be not only a priest of the lineage of Aaron, but to be descended on the female side from the Asmonean Maccabees. Further, it was never disputed that the Levites and priests, who served in the temple till the time of its destruction by Titus, were truly what they represented themselves to be, members of the tribe of Levi and descendants of Aaron : indeed, even at the present day, the families of Levi and Cohen lay claim to the same descent.

As regards the descendants of David in particular, the national belief in the restoration of the kingdom of Israel under a prince of his house, would in itself have been a sufficient inducement to the several members of the royal family, however much reduced in circumstances, to preserve the evidences of their descent with scrupulous and even religious care,—a task, moreover, of no difficulty among a people like the Jews, with whom the family pedigree has always been a matter of special importance. And, in fact, the famous Rabbi Hillel and his grandson Rabbi Gamaliel, who formed schools but not political parties, were both recognized as being of the house of David ; and if their claim be admitted, certainly that of their contemporary Jesus must be equally so.

Besides this, subsequent history declares that the family of David continued in existence long after the time of our Lord Jesus. Eusebius relates*, on the authority of the historian Hegesippus or Joseph, a Jewish Christian, who lived towards the end of the second century, that there were still living members of the family of Jesus, being the grandchildren of Judah (Jude), the brother of Jesus after the flesh, that is to say a son of Joseph and Mary. He states that, after the fall of Jerusalem, Vespasian commanded that all the family of David should be sought, in order that no one of the royal stock might be left among the Jews ; and, further, that in the reign of that Emperor's son,

* ' Eccl. Hist.'

Domitian, two of the grandsons of Judah, the brother of Jesus, having been denounced as such, were brought before that Sovereign and questioned, when they confessed that they were truly descendants of King David. But on further examination, it appeared that they were of very humble condition, living on the produce of a small piece of land, which they cultivated with their own hands. And when asked respecting the Messiah and his kingdom, its nature, and when and where it was to be, they replied that it was not a temporal or earthly, but a heavenly and spiritual one, and that it would happen at the end of the world, when, coming in glory, he would judge the quick and the dead, and would render to every man according to his deeds. Upon this, Domitian, regarding them as silly visionaries beneath his notice, dismissed them and ordered the persecution to cease.

If the authenticity of this anecdote be doubted on account of the very questionable authority of the Christian historian by whom it is related, the fact is nevertheless indisputable that during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, the descent from King David of the pseudo-Messiah, Bar Cocaba, was attested by the famous Rabbi Akiba, the Moses of his age, and believed by hundreds of thousands of his countrymen ; which fact is incompatible with the idea that in the time of Jesus the family of David had already become extinct, and was known to be so. And even as late as the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela met with Jews living in and about Baghdad, under a chief styled the Prince of the Captivity, who was acknowledged to be the lineal descendant of David, King of Israel, and whom even the Mohammedans recognized in that character, calling him 'Our Lord the son of David.'

Looking in other directions, we see among the Mohammedans themselves at the present day numerous persons who claim to be the lineal descendants of their prophet, through his only child Fatima, the wife of Ali, though twelve centuries have elapsed since his death. Not one of these persons could pretend to establish his descent in a strictly legal form ; not many of them would think of showing every link of the chain connecting them with their illustrious progenitor ; and even in those few cases

where documentary evidence may be said to exist, such evidence would in reality prove nothing more than tradition and general repute. And yet no one among their co-religionists so much as dreams of questioning the pretensions of these numerous descendants of the prophet. They possess unquestioned the exclusive right to wear a green turban ; and as they form the only hereditary nobility among the Moslems, they are addressed by the honorary title of 'Seid,' meaning 'Master,' or 'Lord,'—in like manner as 'Don' is applied in Spain, and 'Herr von' in Germany, to those of gentle birth,—even when in the lowest social condition, and performing menial duties in the houses of persons who may not be of like noble extraction.

And lastly, how many persons are there not in England and other countries who trace their descent from the Norman Conquest and the first Crusade, now eight centuries ago; or even from a more remote date ?

In addition to these general considerations, we have in the particular case of our Lord the express declaration of the Apostle Paul, an educated and well-informed Jew, that 'Jesus, the Messiah, our Lord, was made of the seed of David after the flesh'*. This testimony, it must be borne in mind, is not open to the objection that has been raised against similar statements contained in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, on account of the respective dates of those documents being alleged to be later than the occurrences recorded in them ; for it is the explicit declaration of one who was a contemporary of our Lord, and who, having been a violent opponent of the new faith, could hardly have failed to sift the evidence for and against the claim to the Messiahship of one whom he had in the first instance regarded as an impostor ; so that it is not to be imagined that he could have fallen into error on this material point. And as the Apostle's testimony is not to overturn a received opinion, or to support what might be looked on as unreasonable, but is simply corroborative of a fact which in itself is perfectly credible and in accordance with the received history, such testi-

* Rom. i. 3.

mony appears to be absolutely unimpeachable. It is not necessary that Paul should have been personally acquainted with Jesus. The question for decision is, was Jesus in his own and Paul's lifetime commonly reputed to be a descendant of David? And the evidence of a contemporary occupying the position of Paul is conclusive, it being borne in mind that the question is not one of actual descent but simply of repute. If it were tested in our courts of justice at the present day, Paul would be put into the witness-box, not to establish Jesus's pedigree step by step, but to testify to the fact that he was generally reputed to be 'made of the seed of David after the flesh,' and that he, Paul, verily believed such to be the fact; and no cross-questioning could shake such evidence as this.

The conclusion may therefore be safely drawn that Jesus of Nazareth was truly of the stock and lineage of the royal house, and that in this respect he fully answered the expectation of the Jews that the Messiah should be the son of David.

The question of the birth-place of our Lord Jesus is not so easy of solution. Were it not for what is related in the opening chapters of the first and third Gospels, the reasonable inference would be that Jesus of Nazareth, in Galilee of the Gentiles, though of the lineage of David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, of the tribe of Judah, was born at the place after which he was named. If dependence could at all be placed on the historical portions of the fourth Gospel, there are passages in it which might certainly be adduced in support of such an inference. In the first chapter, Philip is made to say to Nathanael, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph' *; to which Nathanael replied, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' And in the seventh chapter the same sentiment is more strongly expressed by some of the people of Jerusalem: 'Shall the Messiah come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Messiah cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?' † But no certain

* John i. 45.

† John vii. 41, 42.

reliance can be placed on those expressions in the fourth Gospel on account of the anti-Jewish feelings of its writer, who manifestly cared as little for the human descent of Jesus and his birth-place, as he did for the accomplishment of the prophecies in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, either in the person of the Messiah himself or in that of John the Baptist; for he represents the latter as explicitly denying that he was the prophet Elijah *, whom the Jews expected to appear before the Lord's coming, though in so doing he contradicts the declarations of Jesus himself, as recorded in the first two historical Gospels †. And what is even more remarkable is, that the writer of this Gospel represents the people of Jerusalem, who of all others most anxiously expected the Messiah in the person of a descendant of their king David, as asserting directly the contrary: 'We know this man whence he is; but when the Messiah cometh, no one knoweth whence he is' ‡; to which Jesus himself is made virtually to assent by replying, 'Ye both know me and whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not' §.

Further, it is deserving of serious notice, that though Nathanael, upon his seeing Jesus shortly after the conversation with Philip already cited, is made to exclaim, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel' ||; yet throughout the whole Gospel Jesus is not once mentioned as having been addressed as the Son of David either by his disciples or by any of the people, who, according to the three other Gospels, freely attributed to him that title.

In fact, there is not in the fourth Gospel so much as an allusion to our Lord's claim to be of the seed of David, except in the one single text already cited, where that claim is positively questioned because he was not out of the town of Bethlehem where David was! Further, it is a remarkable fact that in this Gospel alone the Inscription on the Cross describes the 'King of the Jews' of the other Gospels as 'Jesus of Nazareth.'

* John i. 21. † Matth. xi. 14; Mark ix. 13. ‡ John vii. 27.

§ John vii. 28. || John i. 49.

Disclaiming, however, all dependence on these statements in the fourth Gospel having reference to the birth-place of our Lord, it has to be remarked that from the first Gospel it might be inferred, though it is not expressly stated, that Joseph and Mary were domiciled at Bethlehem until the birth of Jesus ; when, in consequence of the warning of the ‘wise men from the East,’ they fled into Egypt, whence after a time they returned into their native country, and then went to reside at Nazareth in Galilee, where they took up their permanent abode.

The second Gospel is silent on this head, beginning with the mission of John the Baptist, as, in fact, the first Gospel would commence likewise were its first two chapters omitted.

The third Gospel opens with a most beautiful description of the miraculous conception and birth not only of Jesus but also of his relative John the Baptist, which, in spite of its legendary character, may not unreasonably be accepted as having a groundwork of reality. Joseph and Mary are therein described as being resident at Nazareth before the birth of Jesus, as it is universally admitted they were afterwards. Only they are alleged to have gone to Bethlehem, in consequence of a certain taxation by Cyrenius or Quirinius, the Roman Governor of Judea.

The fourth Gospel, like the second, says nothing respecting the birth of our Lord ; but this is only in accordance with the spirit of that document, which does not concern itself with the personal history of the man Jesus so much as with him under his divine aspect. But, as already stated, this Gospel is decidedly in favour of the notion that Jesus was not only bred but born at Nazareth.

Without in the least intending to rely on the Apocryphal Gospels as authorities possessing any real value, it may not be irrelevant to notice that in that of the Nativity, though Joseph is described as resident at Bethlehem, Mary is said to have been living apart from him in Galilee at the time of the Annunciation and miraculous Conception ; and that nine months afterwards, Joseph, who had been away from her all the time, returned and took her with him to his home at Bethlehem. In others Mary

and Joseph are both made to have resided at Jerusalem, where their miraculous espousals took place, and likewise the Annunciation. But this was evidently occasioned by the peculiar sanctity which Mary had by that time acquired, from her having come to be looked on as the 'Mother of God,' whence it was deemed only suitable that she should be withdrawn from Nazareth and placed in immediate connexion with the Temple. By this means, too, Mary, in her advanced state of pregnancy, was spared the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

In all these deflexions from the truth we may perceive the origin and growth of the legend that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, so natural is it to man to make what he imagines or wishes to be true appear to be so. The prophecy of Micah (v. 2) having been understood to foretell that the Messiah, who was to be ruler in Israel, should come out of Bethlehem Ephratah within the limits of the tribe of Judah, it was only natural to suppose he must have been born at that place. When once this idea was entertained, all the rest followed as a matter of course, down to the very caves or holes in the rock, which are identified with the 'inn' where the Holy Family stopped and the 'stable' in which the Saviour was born. The legend of the Bear and Ragged Staff inn at Cumnor, related in a former chapter *, is a striking example of how easily and how speedily this might be effected. And it is under the influence of a feeling akin to that which induces humble tourists to visit the quondam hostelry of Giles Gostling with Scott's novel in their hands, that more enthusiastic and enterprising travellers are led to 'do' the Holy Land, and visit these apocryphal sites with the help of Murray's 'Hand-Book of Syria and Palestine.'

On an impartial consideration of the whole subject, the reasonable conclusion appears to be that our Lord Jesus, though of the lineage of David the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, of the tribe of Judah, was born at the place after which he was named; and as Nazareth is in Galilee, that is to say within the kingdom of Israel, Joseph, or Ephraim, as contradistinguished from that of

* Chapter IV. page 52.

Judah, he may be held to have complied with the condition which by many is deemed to be implied in the prophecy of Isaiah, ‘Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim’;* ‘Messiah ben David’ and ‘Messiah ben Joseph’ being thus seen to be one and the same person.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF JESUS.

WERE it not for the legends representing Bethlehem as having been the birth-place of Jesus of Nazareth, his personal history would unquestionably be rendered far more consistent and intelligible, by regarding the provincial town after which he was named as having been the residence of his parents, not only before and after his birth, as is generally admitted, but at the time of his birth likewise. As regards the doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord, the place at which he was actually born is, however, quite immaterial. His life on earth, like that of every human being, commenced at the moment of conception in his mother’s womb, and not at that of his birth ; which latter is, so to say, an incident of that life, occurring in the regular course of nature, and consequent on the full development of the embryo after the ordinary term of gestation. There is no room for question on this point. The Roman Law, on which that of most civilized countries is based, says explicitly : ‘Qui in utero sunt in toto poene jure civili intelleguntur in rerum natura esse’†, especially ‘quotiens de commodis ipsius partus queritur’‡. And the Jewish Law goes even further than that of Rome ; for while this latter regards the unborn child as existing for its own benefit, the former deems it capable of doing wrong, such as unreasonably kicking its mother and so giving her a cause of complaint to the

* Isa. xi. 13. † ‘Digest.’ Lib. i. Tit. v. c. 26 (*edit.* Mommsen).

‡ *Ibid.* c. 7.

Judge ! When Rabbi Jehudah the Holy was asked at what time evil affections begin to prevail, whether at the first forming of the foetus in the womb or at the time of the child's coming forth, he replied 'from the first forming'*. Since, then, whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the paternity of Jesus and as to the manner in which he was begotten, there is not, and never was, any reasonable doubt whatever as to the fact that he was conceived in the womb of his mother Mary at Nazareth, and not at Bethlehem, it follows that the Messiah's human existence on earth commenced at Nazareth, whether this place be, or be not, regarded as that of his actual birth.

This indisputable fact is the foundation of the dogma of the Christian Church respecting the Incarnation of Jesus Christ ; and accordingly the union of the Divine Nature with the human in the womb of the Virgin Mary is celebrated yearly on the 25th of March, at the feast of the Annunciation, or Lady Day, which is placed nine calendar months, the usual period of gestation, before the feast of the Nativity, or Christmas Day, on the 25th of December, when the Birth of 'Christ' is held to have taken place. And, quite consistently with this, the commencement of the Christian era was originally and correctly fixed at the Incarnation, and not at the Nativity, of 'Christ,' and until the introduction of the New Style the civil year commenced on March 25th, the date of the Incarnation, and not on January 1st.

According to the belief of the universal Christian Church as expressed in the Nicene Creed, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is 'The only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made ; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man ;'—that is to say, in the words of the second of the 'Articles of Religion' of the Established Church of England, he 'took man's nature in the

* 'Talmud': *Sanhed.* fol. 91. 2, and *Beresh. rabb.* fol. 38. 1; as cited by Lightfoot, ii. 570.

womb of the blessed Virgin of her substance ;' and as it is expressed in the 'Te Deum' recited in all Catholic churches, 'When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb,' within which the union of the Divine with the human nature must accordingly have been effected at the moment of conception.

The article of faith thus dogmatically defined is mainly based on the allegations in the introductory chapters of the first and third Gospels, unless it be that those allegations were developed out of the dogma. But the expressions 'Son of God' and 'begotten of the Father' occur in various other portions of the Scriptures of the New Testament, where they are clearly free from that dogmatical bias ; and the question to be considered is, in what sense these expressions were intended by the persons who made use of them.

Now nothing can be more plainly demonstrable than that in the ages when those Scriptures were composed,—it is not requisite to be particular as to the precise dates,—the two terms above mentioned, and other similar ones, had widely different meanings in the estimation of the Jews of Palestine and of their Graeco-Roman conquerors respectively. By the former, as indeed by the natives of Syria and Palestine generally at the present day, the word 'son,' like 'father,' 'brother,' 'child,' is used in various other and much wider senses than that of mere carnal relationship. It is unnecessary to refer to the several applications of such words and the use of the specific term 'the son (or sons) of God,' as occurring in the Old Testament, which are to be found in the Lexicons and Concordances, and will readily present themselves to the recollection of Biblical students. It will be sufficient to cite some of the passages in the New Testament where this specific expression occurs.

Our Lord himself says, in his Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God'; and again, when he taught the people in the Temple, 'Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the

* Matth. v. 9.

angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection'*'. And the Apostle Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;' and also, 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Messiah' †. Consequently the expressions 'sons' and 'children' of God, used by our Lord and his great Apostle, are far from meaning persons standing in the relation of sons to their father according to the flesh, in the literal acceptation of those terms among the Graeco-Romans of those times, and even among us at the present day.

It is the same with the word 'begotten,' which was used by the writers of the New Testament not merely carnally but spiritually. Paul says, 'For in the Messiah Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel; wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me;' adding, 'For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son' ‡, which we well know Timotheus was not, after the flesh. And, again, 'Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds' §. Still more figurative is his expression, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until the Messiah be formed in you' ||.. And Peter says, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead' ¶.

It may be objected that the passage in the second Psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' is cited by the Apostle Paul in the synagogue at Antioch** as having reference to the begetting of Jesus by God as a father. But it must be remarked, in the first place, that the Apostle had said just before, when speaking of David, 'Of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.' And, in the next place, Paul is speaking not of the birth of the Messiah, but

* Luke xx. 36.

† Rom. viii. 14, 16, 17. See further, ver. 19, 21, and chap. ix. 8, 26; Gal. iii. 26; Phil. ii. 15.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 15-17. § Philem. 10.

|| Gal. iv. 19. ¶ 1 Pet. i. 3. ** Acts xiii. 33.

of his resurrection, his words being—and they are most deserving of consideration—‘We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee’*; that is to say, ‘this day’ on which He ‘raised up Jesus again.’ And in strict accordance with this is the same Apostle’s announcement to the Romans ‘of the Gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus the Messiah our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead’†; which might indeed be understood to mean that the Sonship of Jesus was ‘declared’ in the first instance ‘by the resurrection from the dead,’ and not previously or otherwise. To affirm dogmatically in the Nicene Creed that the Son was ‘begotten by the Father before all worlds,’ and then to contend that Paul spoke of that event as having occurred ‘this day,’ is assuredly not only a contradiction in terms, but must be regarded by all ‘orthodox’ Christians as something worse than the heresy which that declaration in the Creed was intended to refute and condemn.

When, on the other hand, we look to the meaning attached to the expression ‘son of God’ by the Gentile Greeks and Romans, we find that they had very clear and definite ideas on the subject. With them a ‘son of God’ meant the son of Zeus or Jupiter, or of some other one of their male deities, actually begotten on some mortal woman by sexual intercourse, the God sometimes manifesting himself in the form of a man, as Jupiter assumed that of Amphitryon when he begat Hercules on Alcmena; sometimes in that of an animal, as of a bull with Io, the mother of Epaphus, or of a swan with Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, who thus became the mother of the Dioscuri, or ‘Sons of God,’ Castor and Pollux; and even in the shape of a shower of gold, as with Danae. When, as in the instance of Semele, the mortal woman was so rash as to require the God to visit her in his divine majesty, her mortal

* Acts xiii. 32, 33.

† Rom. i. 3, 4.

nature could not withstand the presence of the Deity ; so that Bacchus, the child begotten by the God on the woman, had to be kept in his father's thigh until the period of gestation was completed.

It is needless to multiply examples. But one cited by Dr. Döllinger must be specially noted, namely, that of the philosopher Plato, who was supposed to be the son of the God Apollo ; and it was said that Aristo, the husband of his mother Perichthione, was warned in a dream not to approach her till she had brought forth the son she had conceived to that God, in like manner as Joseph, Mary's husband, was warned in a dream that 'that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost,' and he 'knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son'*, Jesus.

When therefore the Gentile converts to Christianity met with the expressions 'Son of God' and 'begotten,' they naturally understood them according to their own preconceived ideas, and not according to those of the Jews by whom those expressions had been used. And such being the case, it may unhesitatingly be asserted that, apart from the introductory chapter of the first Gospel, and the legendary histories of the third and fourth Gospels, there is not only no evidence that the man Jesus was begotten by the Eternal God on Mary, Joseph's wife, but that whatever evidence exists bearing on our Lord's conception and birth is directly to the contrary.

Had Jesus's conception been of the miraculous nature described, the fact would not—nay, could not—have remained hidden from the Jews generally. Besides, it is expressly declared that his birth was announced by a star to the wise men from the East, in a dream to King Herod, by the Holy Spirit to Elizabeth the mother of John, by an angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and by a multitude of the heavenly host to all the world. Under such circumstances the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus must have been notorious facts from the very commencement ; and at his presentation in the Temple, and in the official register of births, the same ought to have been duly declared and

* Matth. i. 20, 25.

entered. Nevertheless, from the statement in the third Gospel*, it would seem that Joseph represented Jesus as his legitimate son! According to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, this the first ‘pious fraud’ of Christianity was not only permitted, but expressly authorized, by Jesus himself; for, in the words of St. Ambrose, ‘maluit enim Dominus aliquos de sua generatione quam de matris pudore dubitare.’ Under this view Mary would also be absolved from the falsehood of speaking, as she did to Jesus, of her husband Joseph as ‘thy father’†. Let this be as it may, nothing can be more positive than that, in the eyes of the public, Jesus passed for the legitimate son of Joseph, the builder, by his wife Mary.

On the other hand, the idea that Jesus was the Son of God, miraculously begotten on Mary, is so abhorrent to the Jewish mind, that had such a pretension been made by him, it would have afforded a much more cogent reason for an accusation of blasphemy against him, than that of his putting himself forward as the Messiah, ‘the Son of God,’ which claim, however unfounded it may have been deemed by the Jews, conveyed to their minds nothing blasphemous in itself. And, in fact, it is in the fourth Gospel alone, which was not written by a Jew, that Jesus is accused before Pilate of this specific crime of blasphemy, in having ‘made himself the Son of God’‡; though this proves nothing except the later composition of that Gospel, when the Gentile notion of the meaning of that expression had come to prevail.

That Jesus should on frequent occasions have been called the Son of God in connexion with his marvellous acts, is to be understood as meaning nothing more than that he must certainly be the Messiah, who by the Jews was so designated; unless, indeed, the expression had no greater significance than the exclamation ‘Mashallah!—‘See what God has willed!’—common in the mouth of the Mohammedans when any thing is done so wonderful as to be looked on as miraculous or impossible except through the special intervention of the Almighty; in like manner as pious persons among ourselves see the ‘hand of God,’ and the

* Luke ii. 22-33.

† Luke ii. 48.

‡ John xix. 7.

'finger of God,' in occurrences which they regard as special dispensations of Providence.

The precise relation of the Messiah to Jehovah Elohim is a mystery insoluble in the present state of human knowledge. The Creed of St. Athanasius, as it is called, contains the declaration that 'as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ,' or Messiah. The truth of this proposition we may not be in a position to deny; but even if we were to assent to it in the fullest and most unrestricted sense, we should not be a step nearer to the solution of the mystery.

We are told, indeed, that 'at four great Councils against four great heresies, the Church promulgated her four great formulæ on the existence of her Lord—ἀληθῶς, τελεως, ἀδιαιρεως, ἀσυγχυτως, —truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly—truly God, perfectly man, indivisibly God and man, distinctly God and man'*. But this proves simply nothing, unless it be at the same time maintained that the Established Church of England is heretical when it declares, in its twenty-first Article respecting Councils, 'Forasmuch as they be assemblies of men, whereof all be not governed with the spirit and word of God, they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God.'

To many learned, pious, and sincere Christians, quite as capable of interpreting the Scriptures as any of the Ecclesiastics assembled at those four or any other Councils, the words used by them, as cited above, are nothing more nor less than blasphemous. Without going so far as the first Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, by whom the Nicene Fathers who settled the Symbol of Faith that still rules Christendom were declared to be 'a set of demoniacs driven by evil furies or malignant passions,' it may be well to show how their successors acted at the Council of Chalcedon, the fourth of the seven General Councils, and in numbers and in dignity far the most distinguished of them all, when the Nicene Creed was authoritatively modified. The following extraordinary scene is taken from the Report of the Council itself, as quoted by Dean Stanley in his 'Lectures on the Eastern

* Farrar, 'The Witness of History to Christ.'

Church.' The moment is that of the Imperial officers ordering that Theodoret, the excellent Bishop of Kars, well known as the commentator and ecclesiastical historian, should enter the assembly :—' And when the most reverend Bishop Theodoret entered, the most reverend the Bishops of Egypt, Illyria, and Palestine shouted out—" Mercy upon us ! the faith is destroyed. The canons of the Church excommunicate him. Turn him out ! turn out the teacher of Nestorius !" On the other hand, the most reverend the Bishops of the East, of Thrace, of Pontus, and of Asia, shouted out—" We were compelled [at the former Council] to subscribe our names to blank papers ; we were scourged into submission. [A nice 'orthodox' way of settling Articles of Religion!] Turn out the Manichæans ; turn out the enemies of Flavian ; turn out the adversaries of the faith !" Dioscurus, the most reverend Bishop of Alexandria, said—" Why is Cyril to be turned out ? It is he whom Theodoret has condemned." The most reverend the Bishops of the East shouted out—" Turn out the murderer Dioscurus ! who knows not the deeds of Dioscurus?" The most reverend the Bishops of Egypt, Illyria, and Palestine shouted out—" Long life to the Empress !" The most reverend the Bishops of the East shouted out—" Turn out the murderers !" The most reverend the Bishops of Egypt shouted out—" The Empress turned out Nestorius ; long life to the Catholic Empress ! The Orthodox Synod refuses to admit Theodoret." Theodoret being, however, admitted by the Imperial officers, and, taking his place, 'the most reverend Bishops of the East shouted out—" He is worthy, worthy !" The most reverend the Bishops of Egypt shouted out—" Don't call him bishop ; he is no bishop. Turn out the fighter against God ; turn out the Jew !" The most reverend the Bishops of the East shouted out—" The Orthodox for the Synod. Turn out the rebels ; turn out the murderers !" The most reverend the Bishops of Egypt—" Turn out the enemy of God. Turn out the defamer of Christ. Long life to the Empress ; long life to the Emperor ; long life to the Catholic Emperor ! Theodoret excommunicated Cyril. If we receive Theodoret, we excommunicate Cyril." At this

point—and it was high time—the Imperial Commissioners who were present put a stop to the clamour, as being unworthy of a meeting of Christian Bishops.

And these are the most reverend fathers of the Church who are imagined to have been competent to pronounce authoritatively on the nature of our Lord Jesus! At the present day would such as they be held to be qualified to instruct the veriest tyro in the rudiments of the Christian religion? Persons who follow such teachers as these might learn a lesson from the heathen Cicero, who, in his ‘Tusculan Disputations,’ after blaming those to whom the immortality of the soul was incredible, because they could not understand and comprehend what the soul is without the body, as if they really understood what it is within the body, adds: ‘For my own part, when I reflect on the nature of the soul, it appears to me to be a much more difficult and obscure matter to understand what the soul is whilst in the body, and as it were in a strange dwelling, than when it has quitted it.’ Let General Councils and Synods, and dogmatists generally, say what they will, it must be left to Science to unfold such mysteries, if ever they are to be made known otherwise than by the express and unequivocal revelation of the Almighty.

We are nevertheless quite competent to apprehend and trace the origin and growth of the legendary history of the conception and birth of Jesus. The Gentile construction of the expression ‘the begotten Son of God’ rendered it impossible to their minds for Jesus, the son of Mary, to have been conceived through carnal intercourse with her husband Joseph, it being inconsistent with the express words of Scripture as understood by them: on the other hand, the spiritual nature of the Jewish worship of Jehovah would not tolerate the idea that the conception of Jesus occurred in the same way as that of Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Romulus and Remus, or any other of the demigods and heroes of pagan Greece and Rome. The most difficult problem of reconciling the two—of pleasing ‘the judicious antiquary,’ the Jew, and ‘the reader of taste,’ the Gentile, after the fashion of Bishop Percy

with the early English ballads*—was solved in the manner detailed in the beautiful epic which forms the first two chapters of the Gospel bearing the name of St. Luke.

The precise time when the history assumed this legendary form may not be easy to determine, though it was unquestionably at an early date. But whenever this may have been, the legend was not long in receiving a development. In the third Gospel the archangel Gabriel announced to Mary the miraculous conception of Jesus. According to the Apocryphal Gospel of ‘The Birth of Mary,’ the Virgin herself was miraculously born, it having been revealed by an angel to her father Joachim that, in accordance with his ‘vow,’ she should be ‘devoted to the Lord from her infancy, and be filled with the Holy Spirit from her mother’s womb.’ This was, however, far from being sufficient. To render Joseph’s wife fitted to be the ‘Mother of God,’ as she was called at a very early period,—the Mother of ‘Jehovah Jesus,’ as her Son is styled by many Protestants,—it became essential that she should be absolutely pure in her life and actions, that she should be a perpetual virgin, not only before and after, but even during the birth of her Son—‘*Virgo ante partum, in partu, post partum.*’ Her ‘Assumption’ followed as a matter of course.

As a further development, it was necessary that Mary should have been altogether free from the original taint of sin inherent in the mortal descendants of Adam; and hence arose the notion that she must have been conceived in her mother’s womb without sin. Accordingly the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin has long been a doctrine of the Catholic Church, though it is only within the last few years that it has been declared by the present Pope to be an infallible dogma. The Mother of God has thus advanced one great step towards her own deification. And this development has already begotten another. The Mother of ‘Christ’ is called the Co-Redemptrix, and is associated with her Son in the work of redemption! The prophecy of Genesis iii. 15 is declared to point to Mary as the one predicted Enemy of Satan, God’s first promise of a Redeemer having been made,

* See above, Chapter IV. p. 48.

not directly and categorically, but imbedded in this His promise of a Co-Redemptress; so that it is said, Christ and all good Christians agree in this, that he and they are alike born of God and Mary. Thus the tortoise has been found for the elephant to stand on; but where is a footing for the tortoise? It will soon be found; for of course the development cannot stop where it is. In like manner as the recently declared Infallibility of the Pope will 'infallibly' lead to the further dogma of his spiritual immortality, on a par with that of the sacred bull *Apis* of antiquity and that of the Dalai Lama of the present day,—for, as the Preacher truly says, 'there is no new thing under the sun,'—so the necessity which led to the monstrous notion of the immaculate conception of Mary in the womb of her mother Anne, must by a logical sequence result in the immaculate conception of Anne herself, and in that of Anne's husband Joachim too, and so on, 'ad infinitum'; unless, indeed, the Gordian knot is cut by the infallible successor of St. Peter, to whom it will be an easy task to incorporate Mary, the Co-Redemptress, into the Blessed Trinity,—or Quaternity, as it will then become,—and to make her a Deity co-eternal and co-ordinate with God the Father, by whom the Son was begotten on Her before all worlds. This would of course necessitate a second alteration of the Nicene Creed. The 'Filioque' would have to be supplemented by 'Matreque,' with the dogmatical declaration of the Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, the Mother, and the Son! The Faith of Rome, in this amended form, would at all events be more consistent than it is at its present stage of partial development, which leaves the Goddess Mother in a state of suspense as a separate Deity.

It may not be uninteresting to compare with the dogmatic belief of the Christian Church that of the Mohammedans. According to the Koran the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary in the form of a man, and 'He said, "I am only the messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a holy son." She said, "How shall I have a son, when man hath not touched me? and I am not unchaste!" He said, "So shall it be. Thy Lord hath said: Easy is this with me; and he will make him a sign to mankind,

and a mercy from me. For it is a thing decreed." And she conceived him, and retired with him to a far-off place. And the throes came upon her by the trunk of a palm.... Then came she with the babe to her people, bearing him. They said, "O Mary! now hast thou done a strange thing ! O sister of Aaron*! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor unchaste thy mother." And she made a sign (to them, pointing) towards the babe. They said, "How shall we speak with him who is in the cradle, an infant?" It said, "Verily I am the servant of God; He hath given me the Book, and He hath made me a prophet. And He hath made me blessed wherever I may be, and hath enjoined me prayer and almsgiving as long as I shall live, and to be duteous to her that bare me; and He hath not made me proud, depraved." This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It be seemeth not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him ! When He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, "Be," and it is †.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INFANCY AND YOUTH OF JESUS.

If there be any spot on the face of the whole earth deserving of veneration above all others in connexion with the history of the Christian Dispensation, it is Nazareth. For, whatever differences of opinion may exist respecting the lineage of our Lord Jesus, his nature, and his birth-place, it must be admitted by all that his mother Mary and her husband Joseph were domiciled at Nazareth, that there Jesus was begotten on Mary and conceived by her, and that there consequently commenced his human existence. At Nazareth was the house in which Mary dwelt,

* By some strange confusion of ideas, Mary is identified with Miriam, the daughter of Amran. † 'The Koran,' tr. Rodwell.

with which, however, no sensible person would think of identifying the ‘Holy House’ shown at the present day at Nazareth as the blessed Virgin’s residence, with the ‘Holy Grotto’ adjoining it, in which it is pretended she was when the Annunciation was made to her by the angel Gabriel, and where we still see it written ‘*Hic Verbum Caro factum est;*’ especially as the Romish tradition is that when the miscreant Saracens acquired possession of the Holy Land, the ‘Santa Casa’ was transported through the air by angels, first into Dalmatia and then to Loreto, where it may now be visited by pious pilgrims, with quite as much benefit to their souls as if they undertook the longer pilgrimage to Nazareth itself.

But, leaving these fictions, it may be affirmed with truth that at Nazareth Jesus lived in his mother’s womb during the greater part, if not the whole, of the period of gestation; and at Nazareth also, in the estimation of many, and as is most probable, he first saw the light. But whether born at Nazareth or at Bethlehem, it was at the former place that he passed his infancy, his youth, and his early manhood; in fact, all his life until his baptism by John and his unction by the Holy Spirit, whereby he was called into a wider field of action for the exercise of his divine mission upon earth.

Nazareth, at the present day, is one of the principal towns of the Turkish Pashalik of Akka or Acre, and contains about 3000 or 4000 inhabitants. It may be presumed to have contained as many in the time of Jesus.

In this provincial town of Galilee our Lord is generally—it might almost be said universally—believed to have belonged to the lowest ranks of society; his father Joseph being alleged to have been a common handicraftsman, a working carpenter, who maintained himself and his wife and family by the produce of his daily labour, and Jesus himself having been brought up to the same calling and practised it during the greater portion of his life. Such is the tradition of the ‘Church,’ received implicitly by all the orthodox, and insisted on quite as much, if not more so, by all the heterodox.

The lowly condition of Jesus and his family has been a favourite and constant theme with divines of all denominations, as holding out to the world a model for imitation. As a child of the people, he is affectingly described as having from his earliest youth shared the hardships and sorrows, and likewise participated in the humble enjoyments, of those of his own rank in life. In his father's lowly dwelling he is said to have learned by times to bow to the dispensations of Providence, and in his straitened circumstances to practise the virtue of self-abnegation. In a lot of life such as his was, the temptations to vanity, dissipation, and pleasure, inevitable in richer and more exalted conditions, could scarcely reach him ; and when he entered upon his mission as a teacher, accompanied by a few followers of the same humble condition of life as his own, and clothed in the same mean attire, the wants and privations of the lower classes of the people presented themselves all the more vividly both to his eye and to his heart ; whilst he could the more readily and fully sympathize with the poor and needy, from having in his youth borne their hardships and experienced their wants and privations.

Similar sentiments respecting the social position of our Lord are entertained by the most opposed in matters of religion. The words of the Hindoo reformer Chunder Sen are, ‘poor and illiterate, brought up in Nazareth—a village notorious for corruption,—under demoralizing influences, his associates the lowest fishermen, from whom he could receive not a single ray of enlightenment, he rose superior to all outward circumstances by the force of his innate greatness, and grew in wisdom, faith, and piety by meditation and prayer, and with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit working within him.’

But the lowest conception of the inferior condition of Jesus is probably that of Sir Richard Norton, in his critical remarks on the marked respect which the Roman centurion is related to ‘have shown to Jesus,—‘an artisan, who had only recently assumed the office of a preacher’*. Premising, correctly enough,

* ‘The Jesus of History,’ p. 234.

that the Jews were looked down on by the Roman legionaries in much the same manner as the Hindoos are by the British troops quartered among them in India, the author contends that 'the improbability of the account may therefore be judged, by supposing the parties to be an Indian fakir and the colonel of an English regiment of cavalry.' The comparison is, however, as ill-chosen as it is erroneous. For this imagined superiority of the foreign officer over the native preacher will vanish when the latter, instead of being lowered to the condition of an ignorant, filthy, lazy mendicant, is compared, as it will be shown he ought rather to be, to the well-born and educated apostle of the Brahmo-Somaj, who is revered by his followers in so high a degree that he is said to receive divine honours from them. Under this view of our Lord's social condition, it is only reasonable to infer that Jesus received from the Roman centurion in Judea the same respect that Chunder Sen would receive from an English colonel in India, especially if this officer were asking of the Hindoo reformer a particular favour, as the Roman centurion was asking of the high-caste Jewish preacher *.

These erroneous notions respecting our Lord's calling and rank in life originate in a total misconception. If the texts of Scripture which have given rise to them be properly interpreted and considered, it may be inferred that the worldly position and early life of Jesus were of quite a different character. He was not a child of the people, but a person in easy, if not affluent circumstances, who devoted his fortune, together with his life, to the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and who, instead of carping at the rich for not relieving the poor, of whom he was one, and preaching a socialistic and communistic crusade against them, set them in his own person the bright example which he kindly and affectionately urged them to follow.

The error has arisen from the word *τέκτων*, in Matth. xiii. 55, and Mark vi. 3, having been improperly translated 'carpenter,' instead of 'builder,' which is its true meaning. The word in question is derived from the verb *τίκτω*, 'to bring into the world,'

* See above, Chapter VI. page 72.

'to produce,' whence its primary signification is a 'producer,' 'author,' 'founder.' Hence it came to signify a 'maker,' 'constructor,' 'builder,' 'artificer' in general, the expression *τεκτονες* *ἀνδρες* being used in this sense by Homer in the passage :—

'Hector to Paris' mansion bent his way;
A noble structure, which himself had built
Aided by all the best *artificers*
Who in the fertile realms of Troy were known.*

And inasmuch as houses were mostly built of wood, the term may well have become specifically applied to a builder or worker in that material. But, even then, this did not mean a common working-carpenter and joiner. The corresponding expression in the Hebrew language is *מְלָטֵה*, of which the meaning is 'a worker in metal, stone, or wood;' the cognate root *מְלַטֵּה* signifying 'to cut' or 'engrave,' to 'work,' especially in metal—not in wood. And this seems to have been the primary application of the word; for Tubal Cain is described as the first skilled artificer in brass and iron †.

The two Gospel texts in which the word *τεκτων* occurs ought therefore to be read, 'Is not this the builder's son?' ‡ and 'Is not this the builder?' §. That there ought not to be any doubt on the subject, is shown by the use of the same word by the Apostle Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, where he calls himself 'a wise *ἀρχιτεκτων*', ||—which is properly translated a 'master-builder'—that is to say, an 'architect.'

Consequently, Joseph was a 'tekton' or builder, as was likewise his son and successor, Jesus. And as in both Gospels the definite article is used when so describing them,—*ὁ τεκτων*,—we are warranted in the conclusion that each of them was *the* builder, *καὶ ἐξοχην*; that is to say, the principal builder, if not the only one of his calling in Nazareth, and perhaps in the whole district.

Some of our Lord's parables and similes, which would have no special bearing when spoken by a common working-carpenter, ac-

* 'The Iliad' (Lord Derby's translation), vi. 365–8.

† Gen. iv. 22. ‡ Matth. xiii. 55. § Mark vi. 3. || 1 Cor. iii. 10.

quire a peculiar force in the mouth of a builder or architect. For instance, ‘ Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have wherewith to finish it ; lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish’*. So, too, ‘ Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and (yet) it fell not ; for it was founded on a rock’† ; with the contrary fate of the foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

It was likewise in his character of ‘ the builder ’ that Jesus uttered his memorable address to Peter, on which the Church of Rome pretends to establish its supremacy, but which, when properly construed, as it will be in a subsequent chapter ‡, proves the entire fallacy of that pretension.

In like manner, the comparison made by Jesus, the builder, of his own body to the Temple of God at Jerusalem, which he was able to destroy and build again in three days §, acquires special and most important significance.

It will be interesting to show how this notion of Jesus’s being the son of a common working-carpenter originated.

In the Canonical Gospels, as has been seen, the term *τεκτων* or ‘ builder ’ was applied both to Joseph and to Jesus. In the Apocryphal Gospel attributed to St. James, and supposed to be of the second century, Joseph is accordingly represented as a builder of houses. After he had taken Mary home with him from Jerusalem, he is stated to have said to her : ‘ Behold I have received thee from the temple of the Lord, and now I leave thee in my house and go to build my buildings,’—ἀπέρχομαι γαρ οἰκοδομησαι τὰς οἰκοδομας μου. And afterwards it is said :—‘ And the sixth month came, and behold Joseph came from his house-building (ἀπὸ τῶν οἰκοδομιῶν αὐτοῦ), and entering his house he found her pregnant.’

* Luke xiv. 28–30. † Matth. vii. 24, 25. ‡ See Chap. XII.

§ Matth. xxvi. 61, xxvii. 40; Mark xv. 29.

But in the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Thomas, Joseph is described as a 'faber' who made ploughs and yokes. And it is related how a couch having been ordered of him by a rich man, he was helped in his work by Jesus ; and one of the pieces of wood used being shorter than the other, Jesus took hold of one end and Joseph of the other, and so they stretched it till it became of the proper length. This fiction is amplified in the Apocryphal Gospel of Matthew, where at the same time Joseph is reduced to the condition of a labourer who made nothing but ox-yokes, ploughs, and implements of husbandry, and wooden bedsteads. And in the Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy it is related how, whenever Joseph was sent for, to work in making gates or milk-pails, or sieves or boxes, the lad Jesus accompanied him ; and as often as Joseph, who appears to have been but a clumsy workman, made any article too long or too short, too wide or too narrow, Jesus would stretch his hand out towards it, and presently it became as Joseph desired to have, yet had not the ability to make it.

It is thus seen how in proportion as the divine nature of Jesus was exalted and his miraculous power increased, Joseph's social position diminished, and with it the human character of Jesus was lowered. In the third and fourth centuries the 'builder' of the Gospels had to all intents and purposes become a common working-carpenter. Justin represents Jesus as having been a maker of ploughs and ox-yokes, and other agricultural implements, whence he derives an allegorical allusion to industry and righteousness. And Eusebius seriously relates that, when the Emperor Julian 'the Apostate' was preparing to enter upon his war against the Persians, he boasted that after its termination he would treat the Christians with so much severity, that even the Carpenter's Son would not be able to help them. Upon which, Didymus, a pious Christian priest residing at Alexandria, in Egypt, rejoined that the Carpenter's Son was then making a coffin for Julian. This he is alleged to have said under the influence of the Holy Spirit ; and accordingly, on Julian's accidental death shortly afterwards, the event was miraculously made known to Didymus, and by him communicated to Athanasius. The authority of such names as

those of Athanasius and Eusebius will, however, hardly be accepted by every one as a sufficient voucher for the truth of this story.

The notion that Joseph was a common working-carpenter is now fully adopted by the Catholic Church, he and the boy Jesus being represented in numerous paintings as working together at their handicraft; and St. Joseph is worshipped as the patron saint of carpenters. In addition to which, as the divine nature of Mary is at the present day being elevated by making her the associate of her Son in the redemption of the world, the infallible Head of the Church of Rome logically widens the separation between the man Joseph and them, by attributing to him especial honour as the *foster-father* of Jesus during his infancy!

In the same way that Jesus is dogmatically declared to be the Son of the Eternal God, begotten on the Virgin Mary, so the latter is declared to have had no other children. Intelligent Protestants must be content to expose themselves to the ban of the Catholic Church, by believing that Joseph and Mary had several other children besides Jesus. On this head the historical Gospels are explicit. That of Matthew has: ‘Is not this the builder’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James (Jacob), and Joseph, and Simon and Judah? And his sisters, are they not all with us?’* That of Mark has: ‘Is not this the builder, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and of Judah and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?’† And in the introduction to the former Gospel, after Joseph is said to have been informed in a dream of Mary’s miraculous pregnancy, and consequently did not put her away as he had intended to do, it is added that he ‘knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son’‡; from which the natural inference is, in spite of the dogmatists, that Joseph did know his wife after the birth of Jesus, and, as is shown by the Gospel history, had a large family by her. In fact, were it not for the preconceived notion of the perpetual virginity of the ‘Mother of God,’ it would be, as is remarked by the late Dean Alford, really incredible that

* Matth. xiii. 55, 56.

† Mark vi. 3.

‡ Matth. i. 25.

the plain words of the history should have been so completely distorted from their ‘prima-facie’ meaning, which is not only literal, but perfectly intelligible and consistent.

The record of Jesus’s infancy in the Canonical Gospels is very scanty. Eight days after his birth he was circumcised and named, and admitted a member of the Jewish congregation as the legitimate son of the builder Joseph and his wife Mary, this ‘pious’ fraud being alleged to have been sanctioned by Jesus himself, out of regard for his mother’s honour *! On the fortieth day after his birth, at his mother’s purification, he is said to have been taken to the Temple at Jerusalem to be redeemed, in accordance with the law that every male that openeth the womb shall be holy unto the Lord †; when likewise, of course, she falsely represented him to be the legitimate son of her husband Joseph.

From that time nothing is recorded of the life of Jesus until he was, at the age of twelve, again taken to the Temple, unless the account of the flight into Egypt be accepted as authentic. There is, however, no little difficulty in reconciling it with the express statement in the third Gospel, immediately following the narrative of the occurrences in the Temple at the time of his mother’s purification, that, ‘when they had performed all the things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth’‡.

In the absence of all trustworthy evidence to the contrary, we may assume that the childhood of Jesus was similar to that of other boys. From the mystical sayings in the fourth Gospel, and from the imaginative pictorial representations of the Divine Infant Jesus and his Blessed Virgin Mother, we have acquired the idea of every thing being so entirely exceptional in the life of Jesus, that though we do read that Mary ‘brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger,’ still the incidents of the event are tinged with a religious colour that renders it difficult to think of him as an infant ‘mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.’ And yet the most orthodox Christian who recognizes Jesus as ‘perfect God’ is at

* See above, Chapter VII. p. 82. † Exod. xiii. 2. ‡ Luke ii. 39.

the same time bound to regard him also as ‘perfect man,’ possessing the same feelings, appetites, and passions as his fellow-men. Like them he ate, drank, slept, performed the offices of nature, walked, and talked. As an infant, he had not only to be suckled by his mother, but dressed and undressed, fed, washed, fondled when he was good, and scolded, nay whipped, when he was naughty. And if we could believe the Apocryphal Gospels, which would hardly seem to have been written without some foundation in truth, he must have been a very naughty boy indeed; for, among other anecdotes related of him, we read how, when the son of Annas (Hannan), the scribe, broke down a dam which Jesus had made for diverting the course of a stream, Jesus said to him ‘without root shall thy shoot be, and thy fruit shall dry up like the branch of a tree that is broken by the wind and is no more;’ and immediately the boy withered. And how, on another occasion, when Jesus was walking with his father Joseph, a boy ran against him and struck him on the shoulder, on which Jesus said to him ‘thou shalt not go on thy way;’ and immediately the boy fell down and died. And again, when the inhabitants of Nazareth complained to Joseph of Jesus’s bad conduct, they were all struck blind*.

It has been contended that the malevolent character of the miracles ascribed by the Apocryphal Gospels to Jesus in his childhood is only a proof that their writers were ignorant of the true spirit of Christianity. But the question may be asked, what is that ‘true’ spirit? Are we bound by it to represent persons and things as they were not in reality? Our Lord himself would have said—

‘*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.*’

And, after all, are the miracles related in the Apocryphal Gospels more opposed to what is conceived to be the true spirit of Christianity than those recorded in the Canonical Gospels of the cursing of the fig-tree †, and the sending of the

* See ‘Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament,’ by W. Wright; ‘The Apocryphal Gospels,’ by B. Harris Cowper.

† Matth. xxi. 19, 20; Mark xi. 13, 14

unclean spirits into a herd of swine, the property of innocent strangers?*

In order that we may be imbued with the true spirit of Christianity, we must first endeavour to form a true idea of its founder; and this we shall never be able to do as long as we continue to regard him merely as he is usually depicted in the paintings conceived after the ideal representations of the fourth Gospel,—a sort of mystic, preter-human, unreal being, conspicuously differing in character, and even in outward appearance, from those with whom he associated and was in daily intercourse. And, as if it were to increase the error of the vulgar notions respecting our Lord Jesus, the great painters, in their love of the beautiful, have further sacrificed the supreme sentiment of truth by portraying the events of his life in all its relations, not as they were in fact, but as they presented themselves to their artistic, but otherwise most ill-informed minds. Hence they have impressed on the imaginations of their admirers a series of ideas in connexion with the sacred history which are most injurious to its proper study, and which will have to be eradicated before the life and character of our Lord can be fully understood and properly appreciated. Modern painters are happily beginning to see this; and accordingly they represent the incidents recorded in the Scriptures, not as if they belonged to their own countries and their own times, but as they may be conceived to have actually occurred in the times and places, and under the circumstances, described by their narrators.

The spirit of Christianity has further been most injuriously influenced by the notion that Jesus, the son of a working-carpenter, was himself a working-carpenter and an unlettered man. But a totally different element is introduced into our estimate of his character and conduct, when we regard him as the eldest son and successor of the well-known builder, Joseph of Nazareth, a man well to do in the world, perhaps even wealthy, and at all events in a position to bestow on his children a liberal education. This view of our Lord's position will, in particular, render more intelligible the incident in his early life which has now to be noticed.

* Matth. viii. 30-34; Mark v. 12-17; Luke viii. 32-37.

The second chapter of Luke's Gospel relates that Jesus's 'parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the pass-over.' Now, as Nazareth was distant from Jerusalem seventy miles or more, it is not likely that every Jewish family in that town, or in other parts of Galilee, would or could have gone up to the feast every year, especially in those troublous times ; though well-to-do people, like Joseph the builder, might have afforded to do so, travelling, as was doubtless necessary, with 'their kins-folk and acquaintance,' in a strong and well-armed party. And Jesus being a well-educated boy, who had already manifested special talent, and taken well to his learning, and thus had 'waxed strong in spirit' and become 'filled with wisdom,' and 'the grace of God was upon him,' it would have been quite natural that he should, at the age of twelve, have been allowed to accompany his parents and their friends to the sacred festival.

When they had fulfilled the days after the custom of the feast, as Joseph and Mary returned homewards, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem unknown to his parents, who, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey, and then sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, but found him not. That is to say, they missed him when they had arrived at the end of the first day's journey, which, like all first day's journeys in that part of the world, was only a short one. Not finding the child, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. 'And it came to pass that after three days [that is to say, on the third day inclusive] they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers' *.

It is supposed by some that Jesus, having then attained the age of twelve years, and become a 'child of the law' or catechumen, remained behind to be examined by those doctors in the Temple—not teaching, but hearing. But in the history it is expressly stated that the boy was not only hearing, but 'asking them questions.' And a child who was being examined would

* Luke ii. 46, 47.

have stood before his examiners, instead of ‘sitting in the midst of the doctors,’ as it is expressly stated Jesus did.

The narrative continues that when his parents found him in the Temple, they were amazed; and his mother said unto him, ‘Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.’ What Joseph said at the boy’s escapade is not recorded, but most probably his words had in them more of anger than of sorrow. To his mother’s affectionate reproof the child replied, ‘How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’* Now, to these words a mysterious meaning has been attached, for which there is really no occasion. Many a highly enthusiastic child among ourselves has made a similar reply, when called on to neglect the service of his heavenly Father for that of his parents in the flesh. It is added that ‘they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.’ And often at the present day have parents in like manner not understood the sayings of precocious children of genius, who, even at the age of twelve, have felt within them a spirit calling them to do their Father’s business, whether in religion, in science, or in art, and who have in consequence escaped from the care of their natural guardians, and have even left their homes altogether. Still, in spite of the aspirations that already filled his bosom and foreshadowed his future career, the youthful Jesus did not contumaciously resist the bidding of his parents, but went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was there subject to them. But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart, as so many loving and proud mothers have done, who, like Mary, have foreseen the future greatness of their darling children. And so ‘Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.’

In the Canonical Gospels the personal history of Jesus, from the age of twelve until he began to be about thirty years old, is a perfect blank. But we are bound to assume that he was brought up to his father’s business of a builder, and practised

* Luke ii. 48, 49.

it for some time, so that he, like Joseph, came to be known as 'the builder' *.

As regards Joseph himself, no further mention is made of him after the journey to Jerusalem, whence it is generally concluded that he died soon afterwards. Indeed in the Apocryphal Gospel bearing his name he is said to have died soon after the return of the Holy Family from Egypt; only this is in direct contradiction to the third Canonical Gospel, from which it is manifest that Joseph survived, at the very least, till Jesus was twelve years old; and, under any circumstances, he must have lived with his wife Mary long enough to have had by her the other children mentioned in the history, and likewise (it may be presumed) long enough to have taught his business to his eldest son Jesus, who, after his death, became his successor as 'the builder' or architect.

Whilst thus following his father's profession, it may be reasonably presumed that his destiny was ever present to the young man's mind, and that he was preparing himself for the time when he should be called on to declare himself openly. Even if we divest our Lord of every thing possessing the slightest tinge of what is styled supernaturalism,—which, in the scientific and so-called intellectual world, is held in such abhorrence,—he might still have resembled hundreds, nay thousands, of aspiring youths, who feel within them the divine afflatus, and look on themselves as destined to perform important parts in the history of mankind. And there never was, perhaps, one of these favoured mortals who have actually raised themselves—or, as in a more humble spirit they might say, have been raised—to do great things, that has not had such a presentiment of his destiny.

But the particular case of our Lord Jesus is excepted altogether from the ordinary course of human events. He was, as he well knew, of the royal lineage of David, and, in common with the rest of his countrymen, he had been taught that the Messiah of prophecy, the expected Saviour and Deliverer of their nation, was to be a descendant of that monarch. He felt too, as so many of them felt, that the time was close at hand when that

* Mark vi. 3.

Redeemer of Israel was to manifest himself; for, if he did not do so speedily, his people would lose their national existence, and consequently the Messiah could no longer help them as a nation. In fact, it was manifest to him that the spiritually anointed King of Israel must be revealed to his people before the final destruction of the Temple, the temporal annihilation of the nation, and the dispersion of its members over all quarters of the globe, never more to be politically reunited.

We shall not, then, be judging the character and conduct of our Lord incorrectly or unworthily if we regard him as anxiously watching the course of public events, and, although probably not yet taking any active part in them, holding himself nevertheless in readiness to step forward whenever, in the pleasure of the All-wise and Omniscient God of his fathers, he should be called on to do so.

Under such circumstances it would be perfectly natural that, as we witness so many examples at the present day, his habits of meditation and study should have taken him away from his business, and that, at the same time, his kindly disposition should have induced him to turn his attention to the cares, the temporal misfortunes, and the difficulties of so many of his distressed countrymen, and to do his utmost to alleviate them, without this interfering, however, with the higher thoughts that were brooding in his mind. The familiar instances of John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, George Peabody, and Angela Burdett-Coutts, out of so many other imitators of their Blessed Lord's example, may serve to give us a sufficiently correct idea of what may have been his general character and conduct in early life and before his Call. That of William Wilberforce will perhaps enable us to appreciate the disastrous consequences, from a worldly point of view, of an excess of philanthropy and beneficence, causing the possessor of wealth to allow his own temporal affairs to go to ruin in his anxiety to relieve the wants and benefit the condition of others.

What Wilberforce did, and at what cost, can never be effaced from the world's history. The abolition of slavery, which he

spent his life and fortune in achieving, and which was virtually accomplished by the British nation only a couple of days before his death, is, in its direct operation on the fate of millions of his fellow men, and in its influence on the entire human race, equivalent to the foundation of a new religion. And yet, had it not been for the filial piety of those nearest and dearest to him, he might, during the last years of his life, have had to apply to himself the words of him whose example he kept incessantly before his eyes : ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head’*.

There can be no doubt that Jesus made use of these words with reference to his own destitute condition. But it does not at all follow that such had always been his position in life. On the contrary, he had become thus reduced in circumstances owing to his caring more for others than for himself; and his words, when thus understood, are far more apposite and impressive in the mouth of a rich man who had become poor, than of one who had always been indigent. They also give a very different meaning to the words of the Apostle Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, from that they have hitherto received; which words, under the view now taken of Jesus’s position in life and character, also acquire a much deeper import.

Paul, when calling on the Corinthians to contribute largely to ‘the poor saints’ at Jerusalem, instances first the Macedonians, whose ‘deep poverty had abounded with the riches of their liberality,’ and then refers to the Lord himself, who (says he) ‘though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor’†. And if these words are read literally, as meaning that Jesus had become poor through his excessive philanthropy and liberality, the appeal made by the Apostle to his example will have far more force than if they were understood to have been spoken figuratively ; and at the same time a light will be thrown on our Lord’s life and conduct, serving to clear away many difficulties and apparent inconsistencies found to exist in the

* Matth. viii. 20.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

Gospel history, as interpreted on the assumption of his having been nothing more than a poor labouring mechanic.

In like manner, the story related in the first Gospel of the young man who came asking Jesus what he should do to have eternal life, receives a totally different construction. He was told to keep the Commandments; to which he replied that he had done so from his youth upwards. On this 'Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me'*'. This exhortation, usually regarded as an abstract lesson, which, from the mouth of a poor man, might almost seem to be dictated by interested motives, has now to be read as a practical direction, altogether beyond the suspicion of any such motives, to follow the teacher's own personal example.

The attempt, too, of Jesus's family to lay hands on him under the pretence of his being out of his mind† may well have arisen from interested motives, their object being to prevent him from squandering away his property on what they not unnaturally regarded as visionary schemes. At the present day we witness frequent instances of such interference in the case of persons well off in the world; though, should a poor mechanic, like George Fox or John Bunyan, feel himself called on to neglect his business, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, or even of promulgating doctrines of a very different character, few of his kinsmen would trouble themselves to check him or prevent him from going whithersoever he might list,—perhaps they would think the further off the better,—provided only he did not leave a wife and family burthensome to them or chargeable on the parish.

The main cause of all this error has been the desire to exalt the divine nature of our Lord Jesus at the expense of his humanity. The poor carpenter's son, born in a stable, uneducated, the companion of outcasts, without a place wherein to rest his head, is made not only the object of veneration, but also an example

* Matth. xix. 21.

† Mark iii. 21.

to be followed, both by devout and simple-minded persons, who imagine they can best serve him by renouncing the pleasures as well as the cares and temptations of this sinful world, and also—which is far worse—by the dangerous class of Socialists and Communists, who profess to find a sanction for their wild schemes in the life and doctrines of Jesus, as so erroneously represented to them.

What is here stated may serve to place in a totally different light our Lord's character and conduct during his early manhood, previously to his baptism by John, and the consequent commencement of his own mission; at the same time that it helps to fill up the blank of nearly twenty years which has hitherto existed in his personal history.

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

At the time of the appearance upon earth of our Lord Jesus, the Jews were divided into two main religious parties, distinguished by the names of Pharisees and Sadducees. They cannot properly be called sects; for they professed the same faith, worshipped together in the Temple at Jerusalem, and were thus members of the same congregation or church.

Though the name Pharisee may be derived from a word signifying ‘separation’ or ‘exclusion,’ it does not necessarily mean more than Methodist did, when it was first applied to those members of the Established Church of England, who, without thinking of secession from it, lived according to method; or than the name of Ritualist does at the present day—the Ritualists being, in fact, the Pharisees of the Anglican Church. The Pharisees, like the Chasidim,—the ‘pious’ or ‘God-fearers’ of the time of the Maccabees,—if they are not the same, were the more religiously

disposed, and also the more important section of the congregation, who gave the most decided expression to the national belief, and strove to establish it by a definite system of teaching and interpreting the Law. With this object they had introduced amplifications and sometimes limitations of the Law itself, and had extended its prescriptions to actions and things, which in themselves were innocent, but which now seemed objectionable or dangerous ; and this was oftentimes done by an artificial and arbitrary interpretation and application. To the ‘hedges’ thus set round the Law, the same binding force was attributed as to the written letter of the Law itself, if even they were not held to be more stringent. And as it was not easy to stop in such a course when once it had been entered on, a system of legal—which with the Jews was religious—casuistry arose, whereby small matters of no real moment were insisted on with painful scrupulousness, and raised to the same level and importance as the first duties of life.

The Sadducees, who are said to have derived their name from Sadoc, a disciple of the celebrated teacher of the Law, Antigonos of Socho, in about the third century before Christ, were diametrically opposed to the Pharisees. They did not, however, form a separate sect on that account. They were, like their opponents, merely a party, or school, within the pale of the national Church, being principally of the higher classes of society, persons of birth, wealth, and rank, who had received a more liberal education than the majority of their countrymen ; and as they were not deterred by any religious scruples from mixing with persons out of the pale of the Church, they not unnaturally became acquainted with the philosophy of the Greeks, and derived many opinions from it. Hence they were philosophers, rationalists, freethinkers, denying the existence of a spiritual world, rejecting the traditions and glosses of the Pharisees ; and though feeling themselves bound by the Law, they looked upon it as a manual for the regulation of their moral conduct, rather than as a system of revealed religion. As we witness among ourselves at the present day, this philosophical scepticism prevailed among

the higher and more intellectual classes, far more than among the middle and lower ranks of the community, who were under the influence of their spiritual teachers.

Within these two classes, but principally belonging to the former, were the Scribes or Lawyers, and the Priests.

The Scribes, or Sopherim, were those Jews, mostly Levites, who had received an education founded on the study of the Scriptures, so as to qualify them to read and expound the Law, the language of which had become dead and unintelligible to the mass of the people, as at the present day Latin is to the Italians. These Scribes or Lawyers took on themselves to explain the written Law by means of the traditions and dogmas with which it had become laden, as is seen to be generally the case with the clergy of all countries. They were, in fact, the teachers whose precepts the Pharisees, or Ritualists, put into practice; and hence it may be understood how Jesus always classed the two together. Though there may not be any existing proof that the Scribes of the time of Jesus had any part in the actual reduction into writing of the Mishna, or oral interpretation of the written Law, it is not unreasonable to suppose they had. At all events, their oral traditions and glosses must have formed the basis of it; and how numerous and minute these had already become, is sufficiently proved by the reproaches and animadversions of Jesus himself.

The Priests, as a body, were of the High Church or Ritualistic party. But, in the time of Jesus, the family of the high-priest were Sadducees, probably on account of their connexion with the Gentile Roman authorities, on whom they were entirely dependent, and whose creatures their position compelled them to be.

Equally within the Jewish congregation, of which they did not form even a separate body, were the Nazarites, who were individuals specially 'set apart' and consecrated to God. Some were made so for life by their parents, even before their birth, as Samson and Samuel had been; others were ascetics, as Elijah; John the Baptist seems to have been both, he having been dedicated to asceticism for life*.

* Luke i. 15.

The Zealots were likewise no sect, but, on the contrary, strict advocates of the Mosaic ritual. They were the followers of Judah of Gamala, a pious and zealous Jew, who, after the example of the Maccabean heroes, had raised the standard of revolt a few years before the birth of Jesus, in the vain hope of freeing his nation from the hated yoke of Rome, and had been conquered and put to death. There still existed, however, numerous adherents of Judah's family, or, it may rather be said, of persons animated by like hopes of the liberation of their beloved country, and ready to cooperate in any enterprise undertaken to realize such hope. Menahem, the youngest son of Judah, became the leader of the revolt in the time of Titus, which was attended with such calamitous results.

Independently of the two great religious parties into which the Jewish congregation is thus seen to have been divided, was the sect of the Essenes, respecting whom our information is not so definite. The Essenes conformed to the Jewish belief and law on most material points. They were strict monotheists and zealous disciples of Moses, whose name they revered next to that of the Almighty, punishing with death any disrespect towards it. They practised circumcision, and kept the Sabbath more closely than the strictest Pharisees, whom they rivalled and even surpassed in many of their ceremonial observances. They also carried their notions of physical purity and impurity to an excess, whereby they were compelled to perform frequent ablutions of the whole body. Besides this, they were strict ascetics, refraining from animal food, and even rejecting animal sacrifices; whereby they excluded themselves from worship in the Temple, and thus cut themselves off from religious communion with the Jewish nation. Through this alone they became schismatics, and formed a separate sect. But, in addition to this, they held many opinions, and adopted many practices, which could only have been derived from Gentile or heathen sources, and which marked more strongly their separation from the Jewish congregation.

The Essenes lived principally in villages and avoided the towns, for the reason already stated*, in which respect they resembled

* See above, Chapter I. page 11.

the Rechabites, who, without being Jews, were in intimate relations with them*. It may even be that the Essenes were identical with these remarkable people. After the fall of Jerusalem, when the daily sacrifice in the Temple came to an end, the distinction between the Essenes and the Jews became less marked, so that the two had then little difficulty in coalescing.

On account of the asceticism and frequent bathings of the Essenes, it has been supposed that John the Baptist was one of them. But this cannot have been the case. The Baptist had followers among the Scribes and Pharisees, and was held in the greatest veneration by the bigoted Jews of the lowest classes, as is proved by the question which Jesus put to the Pharisees and their answer to it†.

Still less could Christianity have been the offspring of Essenianism, as has by some been inconsiderately imagined. Their extreme notions respecting physical impurity were not limited to the mere washing of the hands before sitting down to meals, but required the ablution of the whole body. Yet Jesus did not observe even the former ceremony, whereby he subjected himself to the reproof of the Pharisees, who themselves, with all their rigour, were not so strict as the Essenes. Many other differences between the two may easily be pointed out. Jesus and his disciples took part in the services of the Temple: the Essenes did not. He ate meat and drank wine: they did neither. He anointed himself, or allowed himself to be anointed: they regarded unguents as impure. He commanded that to Cæsar should be rendered the things which were Cæsar's: the Essenes were Communists, and repudiated all civil authorities. In fact, the two were as far opposed in their practices and opinions as are the poles asunder.

Such, then, was the state of religious parties in Judæa and the neighbouring regions in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, when John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judæa, in the valley of the Jordan, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and saying, ‘Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’‡.

* See Jerem. xxxv. † Mark xi. 30-33. ‡ Matth. iii. 2; Mark i. 4.

The mission of this mysterious individual is introduced into the Scripture history as abruptly as is that of his prototype Elijah, whose return to earth was (and is) expected by the Jews as the precursor of the Messiah, and who, on the declarations of our Lord himself*, is believed by Christians to have been represented by John. As a Nazarite bound by a vow, he was the prototype of the Christian ascetics of later ages, having his raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins, and his food being the only nourishment afforded by the desert, namely, locusts and wild honey, with water for his drink.

In the introduction to the third Gospel†, John is stated to have been the only child of the aged priest Zachariah, of the course of Abijah, being the eighth among the descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar, sons of Aaron, appointed by King David and Zadok the prophet for the service of the Temple‡; whilst Zachariah's wife Elisabeth, who was also of the daughters of Aaron, is stated to have been a cousin of Mary, the wife of Joseph. Thus John and Jesus were related through their mothers, Jesus being of the tribe of Judah on the father's side, and of that of Levi on the side of his mother.

The simple fact of this consanguinity, quite apart from its dogmatical development, would clear up much that might otherwise present itself as inconsistent or irreconcilable in the history of the subsequent intercourse between John and Jesus. Indeed it is most probable that, although John may have been unconscious of what was revealed to his more illustrious kinsman alone, he had still seen enough of Jesus during their youth to make him comprehend that he was no ordinary mortal. Even were it otherwise, any attempt to eradicate the idea of the intimate connexion between the two in early life, long prior to their public career, would seem to be a hopeless task. The immortal works of Raffaele and other masters have linked the two so firmly together, that it would scarcely be possible to sever them in the popular mind.

As regards the mission of John, the fundamental and essential

* Matth. xi. 14; Mark ix. 13. † Luke i. 5, 36. ‡ 1 Chr. xxiv. 10.

rite, from which the Baptist derived his distinctive appellation, was baptism, or the total immersion of the body in water. Ablations were already common among the Jews, as among all the religions of the East, and the Essenians had given to them a special extension. Baptism had also become an ordinary ceremony on the introduction of proselytes into the Jewish congregation, a sort of initiatory rite; but never before the time of John had the immersion of the whole body in water received that form, or acquired the same importance, as a rite consequent on the confession and repentance of sins, and as a sign of their remission, and of the reception of the penitent into the flock of believers in the imminent advent of the Kingdom of Heaven under the promised Messiah.

It has been conjectured that the disciples of John formed a society, bound together by some pledge, and holding secret meetings. But, when the open nature of his preaching and the great number of his neophytes are considered, it will be manifest that this could not have been the case. Besides this, there are no traces of any such union. It is true that the Baptist's disciples were a recognized body, numerous and influential in Judæa, and also spread into Asia Minor and perhaps into Egypt, where they existed after the death both of himself and of Jesus*. And this latter fact might even lead, though not necessarily, to the impression that, after the Baptist's imprisonment and death, he had some successor or representative, who administered the rite of baptism in his stead. But the fact of this later existence of John's disciples, apart from those of Jesus, seems to have arisen from no other cause than that the former, living in distant countries, were not aware that the expected Messiah had actually appeared. For we see that as soon as they were made acquainted with the fact by the disciples of Jesus, they readily accepted the announcement; and being the accepted disciples of John, they were qualified to enter at once into the general congregation of believers, which they did accordingly.

John's mission was not confined to his countrymen alone. On

* See Acts xviii. 24, xix. 1-7.

the contrary, he made numerous proselytes among the Gentiles ; and when the Jews were disposed to insist on their own exclusive claim to be members of the Kingdom of Heaven, he answered, ‘Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father ; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham’* ; showing by these words that the promise, ‘In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed,’ was not at all intended to be fulfilled in the restricted sense in which it was generally understood by the Jews.

In thus making proselytes among the heathens, John only followed the example of the Scribes and Pharisees themselves, who were so zealous in making converts to the law of Moses as to lay themselves open to our Lord’s withering denunciation : ‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte ; and when he is made ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves’†.

So solemn a protest against proselytism to the faith in the one true God may at first sight seem inconsistent with the teaching of our Lord himself. But it is perfectly intelligible when the condition of the heathen world at that time is taken into consideration.

The Romans, like the Greeks, from whom they had received the greater part of their mythology, had long fallen from the primitive knowledge and spiritual worship of the only true God, the Creator of all mankind, and had become grossly polytheistic and idolatrous. Not content with the ancient deities of their own Pantheon, they were incessantly adding to their number, whether by the personification of abstract ideas, by the individualizing of the various characters or attributes of a deity, by regarding a single object of worship in several places as being a separate individual in each locality, just as we see instances in the numerous Madonnas of the existing Romish Church, by the adoption of the deities of the various nations conquered by them, or by the apotheosis or deification of human heroes or sovereigns. By these various means the Pantheon of the Roman Empire had, at the time of the commencement of the Christian era, become

* Matth. iii. 9.

† Matth. xxiii. 15.

enlarged to such an extent that the divinities worshipped were indeed legion.

Yet in spite of the polytheistic character of the religion of Greece and Rome, it retained vestiges of its monotheistic origin. Zeus or Jupiter was still the only deity really deserving of the name of God. His residence was in the heavens ; he was the sovereign of Olympus, the dwelling of the Gods, and at the same time the supreme ruler and judge of the human race ; and to him alone was preeminently and peculiarly attached the idea of a divine Providence. Though the other divinities had each their special and peculiar attributes and functions, the influence of Zeus or Jupiter extended into the sphere of their several operations, and often superseded them, through the appropriation to himself of what might have seemed their exclusive rights.

The most learned and pious among the Greeks and Romans not only recognized the existence of this ‘Deus Optimus Maximus,’ but they were likewise conscious, even though they saw through a glass darkly, and might not even venture or care to avow it, that it was mainly from the personification of the various powers and attributes of this single Deity that the multiplicity of divinities had been evolved. Further, though the true relation of mankind to this one Supreme Being may not have been perceived, still the profounder thinkers saw but too plainly the vanity of all metaphysical and philosophical speculations, and longed for the light of a visible example of human virtue, by which they might direct and regulate their moral conscience ; whilst at the same time they had aspirations after some well-defined, intelligible, and consistent doctrine, which should extricate them from the labyrinth of opinions, conjectures, and doubts, respecting the real scope of man’s existence upon earth and his state of being after death.

Under such circumstances it is only natural that the simple monotheistic religion of the Jews should have strongly operated on the minds of all such heathen polytheists as thought deeply and earnestly. Their aspirations after the one omniscient and omnipotent God, which the heathen conscience, worn out as it was by the multitude and pretensions of its deities, could nowhere

else satisfy, are sufficient to explain how the God of the Old Testament drew to Himself such numbers of proselytes from paganism, not only in Rome, but wherever a Jewish synagogue happened to be founded. It was precisely because He alone was not one among many, but endured none other beside Himself, and because no myths were attached to His name, that the imagination of many a Gentile, wearied with the fruitless search after a higher and less anthropomorphic deity than any he had been taught to reverence, was won over. Added to this, a worship at a distance from its temple, and devoid of image or sacrifice, poor and cold in its ceremonies, could not but strike the imagination, from its marked contrast with heathen worship ; whilst the observance of the sabbath, regular prayer, and the abstinence from certain meats, laid on the pious Gentile an easy yoke, which he was by no means unwilling to bear.

It is scarcely necessary to seek for examples in the well-known case of the Roman centurion at Capernaum, whose servant the Elders of the Jews besought Jesus to heal, because (said they) ‘that he was worthy for whom he should do this, for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue’ *; or to that more remarkable instance of the other centurion of the Italian band at Ceasarea, Cornelius, ‘a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave alms to the people and prayed to God alway’ †, who was the first fruits of the Gentiles, receiving the Holy Spirit preparatory to his baptism by Peter into the name of the Lord Jesus.

A yet more remarkable instance of the spirit so rife in the heathen world about the time of our Lord’s appearance upon earth is afforded by the altar, with the inscription ‘To the unknown God,’ which the Apostle Paul saw on his way to the Areopagus at Athens, and which afforded him an opportunity, whereof he availed himself with his usual ability, of explaining the doctrine of the Reformed Jewish Church to the philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoicks, who had imagined him to be the setter-forth of the strange Gods, Jesus and Anastasis ‡.

* Luke vii. 4, 5.

† Acts x. 1, 2.

‡ Acts xvii. 18-31 (*Ἀναστάσις*—the Resurrection).

Another still more remarkable instance, though of a somewhat later date, is that of the sacrifice which, as is related by Tacitus*, Vespasian, before he acquired the Imperial dignity, offered on Mount Carmel to the Deity, known by no name but that of the mountain itself, without any material representation or temple, and to whom, according to ancient usage, the only worship was by sacrifice on an altar in the open air. This nameless deity can have been no other than the Almighty, and the place where this ‘Unknown God’ was worshipped by the pagan Roman general can only have been that which at the present day is called El Makhrakah, ‘the place of burning’; it being still revered as the site of that most prominent occurrence in the career of the prophet Elijah, namely, the sacrifice by means of fire from heaven, and the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, in the time of Ahab, King of Israel †.

There can be no doubt that at that period there prevailed throughout the whole of the heathen world the expectation of some extraordinary event. Plutarch, in his Life of Sylla, relates, among other wonders, how ‘in a clear and clean sky there was heard the sound of a trumpet, with such a loud and dismal blast, as struck terror and amazement into the hearts of the people. The Etruscan sages affirmed that this prodigy betokened the mutation of the age and a general revolution in the world. For, according to them, there are in all eight ages, differing one from another in the lives and the character of men, and to each of these God has allotted a certain measure of time, determined by the circuit of the great year. And when one age is run out, at the approach of another there appears some wonderful sign from earth or heaven, such as makes it manifest at once, to those who have made it their business to study such things, that there has succeeded in the world a new race of men, differing in customs and institutions of life, and more or less regarded by the gods than the preceding’‡.

In addition to this the oracles of the Cumæan Sibyl are, by the unanimous tradition of the Christian Church, alleged to have

* ‘Annals,’ ii. 78.

† 1 Kings xviii. 30–40.

‡ ‘Plutarch,’ tr. Clough, iii. 151.

expressly predicted this great revolution, which was regarded as being accomplished by the advent of the Messiah, their testimony being appealed to in the ancient hymn ‘*Dies Iræ*’—

‘*Teste David cum Sibylla.*’

And although it may not be possible at the present day to decide what were the actual words of these oracles in their original form, in consequence of the fraudulent manipulations to which they were subjected in early Christian and even pre-Christian times, the indisputable fact remains that, some forty years before the birth of Jesus, the poet Virgil, in his fourth Eclogue, expressly appealed to the Sibylline prediction of the expected birth of a child, who was to be the moral regenerator of the world, and under whose rule a blessed and golden age of innocence and happiness would be restored. By the courtly flattery of the Roman poet this prophecy may have been applied to a son of his patron, the Consul Caius Asinius Pollio, to whom the Eclogue in question was inscribed, or it may be to the child of Octavianus Cæsar, or of his sister Octavia. On this point commentators are not agreed; but the existence of the prophecy, and the general presentiment of its approaching fulfilment, are established by the very fact of Virgil’s reference to and application of them.

To persons in such a state of mind as that of the Gentiles, the preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven by John the Baptist was most salutary, as introducing them to the spiritual worship of the Almighty; whereas only the contrary could result from their initiation into the debased and superstitious rites and practices of the Pharisees, which consisted in mere outward observances,—in making clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, whilst they themselves continued full of extortion and excess; in making pretence of long prayers, whilst devouring widows’ houses and appropriating to themselves the property of weak-minded devotees; in the casuistry that enabled votaries to break their oaths and neglect their duties,—to pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; in fine, in the shutting up of the Kingdom of Heaven against men, so that they went not in themselves,

nor suffered those that were entering to go in*. For, as the great Apostle of the Gentiles taught, in the true spirit of his Master, 'not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, who show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another'†.

There was an additional reason why the Baptist's preaching was more acceptable to the Gentiles than to the Jews. He did not require any special confession of faith, nor any strict ceremonial practices; his whole doctrine and ritual, beyond the belief in the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven, consisting in the confession of sins, and the acceptance of baptism at his hands as a token of repentance. And perhaps a further incentive was his mysterious announcement: 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire'‡.

The preaching of John the Baptist created an extraordinary sensation. Not without reason was he believed to be he who had been spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, as 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Eternal, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Eternal shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Eternal hath spoken it'§,—that he was in fact the herald of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was about to be established. And the natural consequence of this was, that there went out to him the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

* Matth. xxiii.

† Rom. ii. 13–15.

‡ Matth. iii. 11, 12.

§ Isa. xl. 3–5.

and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan ; and they were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

How long the Baptist continued the exercise of his mission is not recorded ; but from the fruits of it, which were apparent long after his death, it is reasonable to conclude that he must have preached the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven during several years, at least, before the time when he was superseded by him whose messenger he had declared himself to be.

CHAPTER X.

THE BAPTISM AND CALL OF JESUS.

AFTER John the Baptist had continued his preaching during some considerable period, at length the time arrived when, among the multitudes who went down to Jordan to be baptized by him, confessing their sins, came Jesus from Nazareth to be baptized likewise.

There is no reason for doubting that the immediate object of Jesus in so doing was the same as that of others, namely the confession of his sins, and the obtaining of their remission by repentance and baptism. As a matter of course, the objection has to be met that our Lord was by nature free from sin, and therefore had no need of confession, repentance, and absolution. Indeed the fifteenth Article of Religion of the Established Church of England declares that ‘Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh and in his spirit.’ But this dogma of the Church is based on the statements in the fourth Gospel, the authority of which must be denied. The sins of our Lord Jesus may have been venial ; but to affirm that he was absolutely free from sin is equivalent to the denial of his humanity. A ‘perfect man’ without sin is an absurdity.

Besides, the Scriptures afford sufficient evidence that our Lord was not free from the weakness, which is only another name for the sinfulness, of human nature. The Temptation in the Wilderness, when rightly understood*, must be acknowledged to be a proof of Jesus's human weakness; and the Agony at Gethsemane, recorded with but immaterial variations in the three historical Gospels†, shows distinctly that, at the last moment, he was almost tempted to withdraw from his self-imposed task, though the same had then become his imperative duty. Were the case that of any one at the present day, who, even only in thought, and that but momentarily, should set up his 'will' against what he knew and acknowledged to be the will of God,—who, whilst warning others against yielding to temptation, should in his own person demonstrate that the spirit indeed was willing but the flesh was weak,—who, with 'his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death,' should pray to God to 'take away this cup' from him,—would not such a one feel that he had been led into temptation—had sinned? And were he a Romanist, would he not confess his sinful weakness to his father-confessor, and be made to do penance for it? The writer of the fourth Gospel was too shrewd a casuist not to perceive this; and accordingly he has not only omitted the 'Temptation in the Wilderness,' but also suppressed the 'Agony,' substituting for it the statement that Jesus 'lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee'‡.

Consistently with the whole character of that, for all true Christians, most 'humiliating' document, the Baptism of Jesus by John, like the Temptation and the Agony, is omitted in the fourth Gospel. Such incidents would be inconsistent with the picture drawn in that document of the Messiah, 'the Son of God,' not as the Jewish apostles and disciples understood this expression, but as the Gentile converts imagined it.

The baptism of Jesus is, however, recorded in all the other

* See on this subject the following Chapter, p. 127 *et seq.*

† Matth. xxvi. 36–42; Mark xiv. 32–39; Luke xxii. 41–44.

‡ John xvii. 1.

Gospels, and must unquestionably be received as an historical fact, notwithstanding that the several narratives differ in some important particulars.

In the first Gospel it is said that when Jesus came to John to be baptized, the latter 'forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him'*. In the second Gospel these details are omitted†. In the third Gospel the whole incident is described yet more briefly‡. As will have to be shown, the usual progress of development and transmutation was already going on.

As John and Jesus were related by blood, and the former had already become acquainted with the superior character of his kinsman, and with his previous philanthropic course of life, the conversation recorded in the first Gospel as having taken place between them on the occasion of their meeting on the banks of the Jordan, is perfectly intelligible and consistent. But though the Baptist may have known his illustrious relative to be a scion of the royal stock of David, it is not at all required by the Scripture history that we should suppose him to have actually recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed the contrary opinion is more reasonable. Jesus had not yet declared himself; he may even have not yet absolutely decided on undertaking his mission. All that is certain is that John was conscious of being in the presence of him who was to succeed him, just as the prophet Elijah recognized Elisha, the son of Shaphat, as his successor; though upon Jesus would descend more than a double portion of the Spirit that had fallen upon John. And it is not to be doubted that the Baptist's bearing witness to him was the signal to Jesus that at length his hour was come. His baptism was in fact the turning-point in his mortal career, and the inauguration of his divine mission.

As has already been stated, the baptism of Jesus by John, though recorded in the three historical Gospels, is omitted in the

* Matth. iii. 14, 15.

† Mark i. 9.

‡ Luke iii. 21.

fourth, the reason being that such an act would imply inferiority on the part of him of whom it had just been said, ‘ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ’*. In connexion with such a Being the idea of baptism for the remission of sins was necessarily precluded ; and therefore what is said instead is, ‘ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ’†.

The text just cited will give occasion to some further remarks in the sequel‡. But in the first instance it is necessary to notice the remarkable event which followed on Jesus’s coming to John the Baptist, and which is specially mentioned in all four Gospels, only that the particulars given in the last two differ materially from those narrated in the first and second.

In Matthew’s Gospel it is said that ‘ Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water ; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him ; and, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Then was Jesus led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil ’§.

The corresponding passage in the second Gospel is, ‘ And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him ; and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness ’||.

It will be perceived that these two passages are almost identical. And if the event recorded be considered apart from the legendary form subsequently imparted to it, the two writers may readily be understood as describing, in the figurative language of our Lord’s countrymen, nothing more than a spiritual influence to which he was then subjected, and which then first clearly revealed to him his true character and mission, and constrained

* John i. 1.

† Ibid. 29.

‡ See page 124.

§ Matth. iii. 16, 17; iv. 1.

|| Mark i. 10-12.

him to retire ('drove him') into the desert, to reflect on the important duty he was thus called on to perform.

The precise nature of this spiritual communication shall not be inquired into here; it is sufficient to say that it was spiritual, and that whether it was accompanied by any outward manifestation or not is immaterial.

The expression 'This is my beloved Son' does not of necessity mean any more than the same words in the mouth of the prophet Nathan respecting Solomon, at the time when king David had expressed his desire to build the first Temple: 'He shall build me a house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son'* . As the Almighty then declared to David, through the prophet Nathan, that He would be a father to his son Solomon, and that Solomon should be His son, so now He declared by the Holy Spirit to David's far greater son Jesus, that he was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased.

So, too, the statement that the Spirit of God descended like a dove, does not mean that a bird of that description actually descended from heaven in a physical and visible form, and lighted upon Jesus. Here, also, the expression is figurative, and intended simply to convey the idea of the instantaneousness of the inspiration.

The dove or pigeon is a bird of rapid and unwearied flight, to which allusion is made by the Psalmist, when he says, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest'†. In like manner this bird is frequently referred to by profane writers of antiquity on account of its rapid flight. Sophocles, in his 'Œdipus at Colonus,' puts into the mouth of the chorus the words—

'Might I, like the soaring dove,
Roam the aerial fields above,
Her, who borne on tempest wings
Forth with rustling pinion springs,—
Sweet it were, from clouds on high,
Battle's changeful tide to spy'‡.

* 1 Chr. xvii. 12, 13.

† Ps. lv. 6.

‡ Anstice's 'Selections.'

And Virgil, in a well-known passage, writes—

‘Qualis spelunca subito commota columba,
 mox aëre lapes quieto
Radit iter liquidum, celeres neque commovet alas’*.

Among the heathens this bird was absolutely sacred, it being especially dedicated to the goddess Venus. Herodotus relates a story of two black pigeons that flew from Thebes in Egypt, the one to Dodona in Greece, where it proclaimed in human voice that it was fitting an oracle should be erected there to Zeus, and the other to the Libyan Oasis, where it in like manner caused to be founded the oracle of the same God, under his Græco-Egyptian name of Jupiter Ammon.

From its having been the bearer of the olive-branch to Noah after the flood, the dove seems also to have acquired a sacred character among the Jews. The Talmud contains a legend of how the renegade Elisha ben Abuyah, when passing the ruins of the Temple on the day of Atonement, heard a voice within, murmuring like a dove, and saying ‘All men shall be forgiven this day, save Elisha ben Abuyah, who, knowing me, has betrayed me’†.

Such being the estimation in which the dove was generally held, it ought not to cause surprise that, in Luke’s account of this vision of Jesus, the first sensuous Gentile development should have taken place. With this writer it is not sufficient that Jesus should have seen in the spirit—in his ‘mind’s eye’—the heavens opened unto him, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him; but it is expressly stated as a fact that ‘the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him’‡.

This may not, however, have been an intentional misrepresentation on the part of the author of the third Gospel; though, even if it was so, he speaks only of the appearance of this material dove to Jesus himself, and makes no mention of John as having witnessed this physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

* *Aeneid.* v. 213–217.

† E. Deutsch in ‘Quarterly Review.’

‡ Luke iii. 22.

But the same explanation cannot be given to the words of the fourth Gospel. There the unqualified assertion is, that ‘The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel: therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God’*.

This is unhappily a specimen of the ‘development’ of the truth—which means the perversion of a simple historical fact—worthy of the latest ages of the Catholic Church. And it serves to show that the hierophants of the Eastern Church of New Rome were guilty, if possible, of even grosser imposition on their ignorant and credulous flocks than those of her Western sister; or, it must rather be said that the Fathers of the Universal Church, in an age earlier than we well like to contemplate, set both these Churches the wretched example, which each of them has been but too ready to follow.

It is really revolting to trace the further development of this legend of the ‘real presence’ of the Holy Spirit in the bodily shape of a dove.

In the several Apocryphal Gospels it is narrated, with many details, how Joseph was chosen by the Holy Spirit as the betrothed of the Virgin Mary, in all of which the dove plays a prominent part. In the ‘Protevangelium,’ or the Gospel according to St. James, Joseph and the other candidates were directed to lay their rods upon the altar in the Temple, and when Joseph brought his rod, a dove proceeded out of it and perched upon his head. In the Gospel attributed to Matthew, the Spirit of the Lord, in the

* John i. 29-34.

form of a dove, ‘came down from heaven and perched upon the top of Joseph’s rod ;’ and in another version the dove, whiter than snow and most beautiful, went forth from the end of Joseph’s rod, and after fluttering a long while among the pinnacles of the Temple, at length flew up to heaven.

From Christian fables of this debased form it is almost a relief to turn to the more matter-of-fact legends of Mohammedanism, in which the dove is made to play a part. One of these is that at the time of the Hegira, or Flight from Mecca to Medina, the Prophet was so hotly pursued that he was forced to hide himself in a cave, when instantly two wild doves built their nest and laid their eggs at the entrance ; whereby the pursuers were convinced that no one could possibly have entered the cave for many days, and so they passed on without examining it. For this the doves were blessed, and have ever since been sacred within the Holy Territory. Another story is that the Arabian prophet had a white dove, which used to fly round his head, settle on his shoulder, and seem to whisper in his ear, whence he professed to derive divine inspiration, as if it were an incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

Reverting to Christianity, we meet with a Romish legend—and there are doubtless many similar ones—that, in the tenth century, during the pontificate of Gregory the Fifth, there was a pious cook, on whose head the Holy Spirit miraculously descended in the form of a dove, and thus pointed him out to be chosen as Bishop, and eventually to be canonized ; this fable being faithfully depicted in a painting now existing in the Church of St. Peter at Louvain.

There is nothing more monstrous in heathen mythology—not even the story of Jupiter’s visiting Leda in the form of a swan, which possesses a classic elegance—than this grossly sensuous fiction of the physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit, which has been imposed upon Christendom on the alleged authority of the beloved disciple of our Lord, and which merits the severest reprobation of all spiritually minded Christians. Instead of which, we see in Greek and Roman paintings the Holy Spirit irrever-

ently and idolatrously represented in the form of a dove, even in pictures of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the miraculous conception of Jesus—as if the ‘real presence’ of the Holy Spirit in a bodily shape were needed to give it efficacy; and from such paintings it has been introduced not only into Romish churches, but, inconsiderately and inconsistently, into Protestant places of worship. And what is inconceivably worse than even this, Protestant hymns are addressed to the Sacred Dove!

In the ‘Christian Year,’ of which the 128th edition was printed in 1869,—and there must be many more since,—we read—

‘But when He came the second time,
 He came in power and love;
Softer than gale at morning prime
 Hovered His holy Dove.’

And in the volume of ‘Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship,’ published under the direction of the Tract Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Third Person of the Trinity is thus invoked—

‘Come, gracious Spirit, heavenly Dove,
 With light and comfort from above.’

And in another hymn it is said—

‘We love the sacred font,
 For there the Holy Dove
To pour is ever wont
 His blessing from above.’

Many more examples might unhappily be adduced, but these cited are sufficient to show how Christian knowledge is being ‘promoted’ in England towards the close of the intellectual and enlightened nineteenth century. If Christians would but give to this most important subject a moment’s serious reflection, they could not but feel with shame that this Peristerolatry is incalculably more debased and more debasing than Mariolatry, or any of the endless other forms of Idolatry of the Romish Church.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

At this distance of time from our Lord's appearance on earth, after so much learned study of the records of his life and teaching, and when the belief in him as the Messiah or Christ has spread over the greater portion of the habitable globe, it may well seem extraordinary that there should exist any question as to the character of his mission, and especially as to his own conception of it; or, it may more properly be said, the wonder is that now, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, such a question should be discussed more earnestly and widely, perhaps more ably, and certainly more unreservedly, than ever it was before. Yet nothing could have been stronger or more sincere than was the faith of our Lord's disciples in the first ages of Christianity; and had it not been for the 'pious' frauds of the heads of the 'Church' founded by them, which have so miserably distorted the truth, there would not have been so much, or indeed any, room for the doubts that unhappily exist at the present day.

Of all the occurrences in our Lord's career upon earth, there is none perhaps that has given more occasion to discussion than the Temptation in the Wilderness: and not without reason; because the proper understanding of this occurrence affords a key to the true meaning of his subsequent course of life.

The circumstances of this most important incident are recorded in the first three Gospels, though in the second of them the details of the Temptation itself, contained in the first and third Gospels, are inexplicably omitted altogether. Nevertheless, the second Gospel records the material fact that after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus, 'immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness'*; thereby showing the continuous unbroken operation of the Spirit. The same might, indeed, be inferred from the more detailed narrative in the first Gospel; but unfortunately a

* Mark i. 12.

break in that narrative is most unnecessarily made by the arbitrary division into chapters*. And in the third Gospel this break is more strongly marked by the uncalled-for interpolation of the pedigree of Jesus between the Call and the Temptation †, and by the statement that Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, returned to Judea and was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness ‡; as if the two occurrences were separate and independent.

The only proper way to regard this history, is to assume—as we are warranted in doing by the record of the first and second Gospels—that the Call and the Temptation were but parts of one continuous operation of the Holy Spirit; that no sooner was Jesus inspired with the knowledge, the conviction, that he was the Messiah of prophecy,—the idea of which may previously have existed in his mind, but had never before been seriously entertained by him,—he felt at once that his hour was come, and immediately hurried away—was driven by the Spirit—into the wilderness or desert valley of the Jordan, there to meditate in solitude and prayer on the work to which he now knew himself to be dedicated, and to decide in what manner he was to make manifest to the world the momentous fact that he was ‘the Son of God.’

It would be of little avail to discuss here the nature of the communication from the world of spirits described more or less minutely in the three Gospels; because, in order to do so, it would be necessary to assume certain premises, which could not fail to be dissented from by many, and this, too, for widely different reasons, so that the discussion would only lead to widely differing, but no practical, results. There is, however, a common ground on which all may stand, who do not dispute the fact of the occurrence altogether; and this is, that under any circumstances the history represents the strong conflict that then took place in the mind of Jesus, however the same may have been produced, and whatever the form in which it may have been outwardly manifested. Therefore, it is this mental conflict alone—this Tempta-

* Matth. iii. 16, 17; iv. 1 *et seqq.* † Luke iii. 23–38. ‡ Luke iv. 1.

tion—that will be here considered. And from the narrative it appears to have assumed three distinct forms or phases.

The first form of temptation was, that if our Lord Jesus was really the Messiah, the Son of God, he should command that the stones of the desert be made bread *. This was the first and most natural thought that, in his then reduced circumstances, an evil spirit would excite in his mind. His pecuniary resources were not such as would seem to justify so bold a step as that of undertaking his mission at all. He was in want of the very means of subsistence. Like the prodigal son in his own parable †, he had wasted his substance, though not in the same manner. How, then, could he set about such an undertaking? His experience as a builder had taught him, as he afterwards taught his disciples, that one ‘intending to build a tower sitteth down first and counteth the cost, whether he have wherewith to finish it; lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish’ ‡. But, on the other hand, he well knew that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It is for man to submit to the supreme will of the Allwise Disposer of events, and to trust implicitly in Him. His heavenly Father had decreed that he should undertake the office, and He would supply him with the means of performing its duties. Jesus, therefore, resisted this form of temptation, and decided on acting precisely as he shortly afterwards directed his disciples to do:—‘Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you’ §. Or more specifically, ‘Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall

* Matth. iv. 3.

† Luke xv. 11 *et seqq.*

‡ Luke xiv. 28–30.

§ Matth. vi. 25–33.

enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence' *. The whole Gospel history demonstrates how entirely the teaching of Jesus conformed to his own practice. And the more the details of the Scripture narrative are investigated and considered, the more apparent it will be that a far better acquaintance with the personal history of our Lord, and the motives for his conduct, is to be derived from his numerous recorded sayings, than it is possible to obtain from the scanty record of his actions themselves.

The second form of temptation that presented itself to the mind of Jesus was, that he ought, as the Messiah, to manifest himself and establish his Kingdom in a supernatural manner. Such was at that time the expectation of many of his countrymen, as it is at the present day the belief of those who still look for the appearance of the Messiah among them upon earth. It was in this spirit that the Scribes and Pharisees repeatedly tempted our Lord by demanding of him a proof of his being really the Messiah—that he should show them a sign from heaven †; to which his answer was, that there should be no sign given but the sign of the prophet Jonah, thereby alluding to his own resurrection from the dead after three days; though this allusion, like his declaration—so appropriate to the 'builder'—that he would destroy the Temple and build it up again in three days, his opponents could not or would not understand, any more than his disciples themselves appear to have understood it.

To this second form of temptation the answer was, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Jesus was called to be the Messiah in accordance with the promise to his forefathers and with the prophecies in Holy Writ; and the Kingdom of Heaven was to be established in men's hearts by the precepts and example of the Messiah, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit. As our Lord said at a later period, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead' ‡,—a saying which is as appropriate at the present day as it was when uttered.

* Matth. x. 9-11. † Matth. xii. 38, xvi. 1; Luke xi. 29. ‡ Luke xvi. 31.

The third form of temptation was, that the Messiah should emulate the valiant Maccabean heroes, and openly declare himself to be the Prince of a temporal kingdom, the successor of his father David, King of Israel. But were he to do this, the Kingdom of God would have to be set aside, or at all events made subordinate to that of the Prince of this world. We read how the very thought that Jesus was about to enter into his kingdom influenced the minds of his disciples, and instantly engendered bad feelings among them. The mother of Zebedee's children lost no time in asking that her two sons might sit, the one on the Messiah's right hand and the other on his left in his kingdom *; whereat the other disciples were, not unnaturally, moved with indignation. And we know, alas ! that when all hopes of the restoration of the temporal kingdom of David were seen to be lost, Judas betrayed, and Peter denied his Master, whilst all the other disciples forsook him and fled ! So true is it that a temporal Kingdom of the Messiah is incompatible with his spiritual one,— that we cannot serve both God and Mammon. But this, perhaps the most tempting suggestion of all, was soon rejected. In the same terms in which he addressed Simon Peter at a subsequent period, our Lord exclaimed, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’

The final result of this Temptation, as it presented itself in its various forms to the mind of Jesus, was, that the Kingdom of the Messiah could not be established either by supernatural means or by material force ; that it must in fact be merged in the Kingdom of God, whose will alone was to be done on earth as it is in heaven. And Jesus being now freed from all further assaults of the evil spirit, good spirits sent by God came and ministered to him, imparting to his troubled mind the support and comfort he stood so much in need of, after the severe trial to which he had been subjected †.

In the third Gospel the second and third forms of temptation, as given in the first Gospel, are transposed, though without materially

* Matth. xx. 20, 21.

† Matth. iv. 11.

affecting the narrative. In the fourth Gospel, as has already been stated, this incident of our Lord's Temptation, which, if rightly considered, affords the key to the real character and object of his mission, is passed over in silence. It was not the object or intention of the writer of that document to place the hope of Israel in the true light.

The line of conduct which Jesus had to pursue after he had decided on its general character, though simple in conception, was nevertheless extremely difficult of realization. He well knew that before the then existing generation should pass away the material Temple of the Almighty at Jerusalem would be destroyed never to be rebuilt, and the worshippers in that Temple, the would-be citizens of the expected renovated Kingdom of Israel, would be struck down, never more to exist as a nation, but, on the contrary, to be scattered over the face of the earth, and to become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations whither the Lord should lead them *. And, as was so plainly shown by his repeated saying, 'My kingdom is not of the world,' he knew that the Kingdom of the Messiah on earth could exist only spiritually; for it was to be merged in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But he also knew that his countrymen, the Jews, with their crude ideas respecting the Messiah's Kingdom, could not be brought to understand all this. They would persist in regarding that kingdom as something to be manifested to their senses, even though the more enlightened among them might not expect it to be of a temporal character according to their original idea of it. Of all things the last that they could have anticipated was the way in which the national hope has been realized. The spiritual Kingdom of God and of His Messiah on earth has gone on, and still goes on, increasing like the grain of mustard-seed of the parable, 'which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof' †.

* Deut. xxviii. 37.

† Matth. xiii. 31, 32.

To have attempted to promulgate these truths in their naked form would not only have been useless, but would have defeated our Lord's object; for no one would have listened to what would have seemed an utter absurdity. In the first instance, therefore, he could only preach the Kingdom of Heaven as John had preached it before him; and although he knew that, sooner or later, this must inevitably lead to his recognition by his disciples in his true character, and that eventually he would be compelled to avow himself openly, still his only practical course of action was to postpone, until the latest moment, and by every means in his power, the manifestation of his true character; and when at last that manifestation should be inevitable, he must then take care that it did not lead to a collision with the temporal power. He plainly foresaw that he would have to give his life a ransom for many*; but when that sacrifice had to be made, it was essential that he should not suffer in the character of an unsuccessful rebel against imperial Rome, as the would-be restorer of the temporal kingdom of David, but in that of the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Prince of the heavenly kingdom on earth.

It has been asserted that a crucified or suffering Messiah or Anointed king—*Xpíos éoravp̄mevō*—is a contradiction in terms; but this is not true: it is its opposition to preconceived ideas that alone has caused it to be so imagined by those who could not be brought to relinquish those ideas, even when their erroneousness had been demonstrated. Nevertheless it is quite true that before Jesus could represent himself in that character, the last tie which bound him to the popular traditional belief had to be irrevocably broken by his ignominious death on the Cross.

It has also been contended that our Lord's offer of the Kingdom of Heaven, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, was inconsistent with the office he is alleged to have assumed, as showing that Jesus himself had not made up his mind in the first instance,—was not himself conscious of the true nature of his mission,—had not then assumed the character of the Messiah. But this a great mistake. The course adopted by our Lord was the

* Mark x. 45.

same as is naturally pursued by every one. The propounders of novel doctrines, whether true or false, generally present them first to those nearest to them ; and when they have done so, they, with rare exceptions, do not meet with the favour they had calculated on. The treatment our Lord received from his fellow-townsman at Nazareth caused him to say, ‘A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house’*. It was the same at Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel to the Jews in vain, whereas the Gentiles received it favourably ; so that the former, when they saw the multitudes, were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. ‘Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles’†.

It may perhaps be objected further that, by acting as he did, Jesus was guilty of deceit, duplicity, falsehood. But in truth he merely acted with that prudence and discretion which every leader of an enterprise, every ruler or head of an establishment, is bound to exercise. No general announces publicly beforehand the plan of his campaign : he may not even, in the first instance, communicate it to the officers of his staff most in his confidence. He does not tell them any falsehoods, he does not mislead them by misrepresentations or insinuations of what is untrue : he simply keeps his plans secret within his own bosom, until the moment shall arrive when he may deem it expedient to reveal them—first to his intimates, then to those more remote from him, and lastly to all the world. It is recorded that Jesus expressly commanded his disciples to tell no man that he was the Messiah ‡ ; that they were not to speak of the vision on the mount till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead § ; that he expounded parables to them, the meaning of which he kept secret from the generality of his hearers || ; in all which

* Matth. xiii. 57. † Acts xiii. 46. ‡ Matth. xvi. 20; Mark viii. 30.

§ Matth. xvii. 9; Mark ix. 9. || Matth. xiii. 10; Luke viii. 10.

instances, as in so many others, he simply put into practice his own precept to his disciples, ‘Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves’*.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOOD TIDINGS.

THE object of the mission of John was accomplished by the baptism of the Messiah, of whose advent he was the messenger. Soon afterwards the Baptist was arrested by King Herod Antipas. The multitudes that had flocked down to the banks of the Jordan, to hear his preaching and to prepare themselves for the approaching Kingdom of Heaven, could not have been a matter of indifference to the civil and military authorities of the country. The Romans themselves had reason to know that the frequent revolts among the Jews all partook more or less of a religious character. Still, as a rule, they were tolerant of merely religious movements among the nations subjugated by them; and as they could not detect in John’s preaching and practice any thing absolutely dangerous and likely to lead to practical results, they did not deem it requisite to put a check on him. As to any interference with themselves on the part of the national god, they could afford to disregard that. Pilate would doubtless have said in the name of Tiberius Cæsar, as Rabshakeh had said in that of Sennacherib, ‘Who are they among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?’† And he might have contentedly awaited the recurrence of a miracle, such as that which had delivered King Hezekiah and his people from the hosts of the Assyrians.

But with Herod the case was different. Being better ac-

* Matth. x. 16.

† Isa. xxxvi. 20.

quainted with the nature of the expectation of his countrymen, he may have entertained a superstitious dread of such an occurrence, even though not believing in its realization ; and, therefore, for reasons that did not present themselves to the mind of Pilate, he would have regarded John's preaching as symptomatic of revolt. In fact, this is alleged by the historian Josephus to have been Herod's motive for imprisoning the Baptist, and eventually putting him to death. The Scripture narrative gives a more special reason for Herod's conduct, namely, John's reproof of his incestuous intercourse with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and his other misdeeds*. The two motives are not incompatible, though the latter, as is most natural, may have been the immediate cause of action on the part of the Jewish monarch.

Be this as it may, it does not appear that Jesus made any public manifestation of his own mission till after the Baptist's ministry had been summarily put an end to by his imprisonment by Herod. But when he heard of John's imprisonment, he ' returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee' †, and there began ' preaching the Good Tidings of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe the good tidings' ‡.

It is not intended to dwell here on the various circumstances of the brief but eventful public life of our Lord Jesus, as recorded in the Scriptures of the New Testament. The main facts of his personal history, set forth in the three synoptical Gospels, are known to all inquiring Christians, and to many Jews likewise, especially since the appearance of the numerous works that during the last few years have issued from the press in elucidation of that history. But though it is unnecessary to discuss the occurrences of our Lord's life generally, there are a few salient points in it that require to be specially noticed.

In the first place it must be remarked that though Jesus preached the Good Tidings of the Kingdom of God as John had done before him, he was in no wise his successor and represen-

* Matth. xiv. 3, 4; Luke iii. 19. † Luke iv. 14. ‡ Mark i. 14, 15.

tative, as Elisha had been of Elijah. He was not an ascetic like John ; he did not baptize for the remission of sins as John had done ; and the fact that the disciples of John came, and John himself sent, to inquire about him, is a convincing proof that there was nothing between the two in common, except the Kingdom of Heaven, which they both preached.

As regards the specific character of our Lord's preaching, not the slightest hint is given of his having said any thing that should lead the people, or even his own disciples, in the first instance, to entertain any novel opinions respecting the Messiah. His origin, nature, and attributes remained according to the existing Jewish notions on these subjects ; and the expectation of the disciples of Jesus were the same as those of their countrymen generally ; and these previous notions the disciples, as Jews, continued to entertain during their Master's lifetime, and likewise after his death, excepting so far only as the same were modified by events which, however much opposed to their preconceived ideas, they could not gainsay. History shows how signally they were disappointed, first by the crucifixion of the Messiah, and afterwards by the destruction of the Holy City, Jerusalem, and how grievously they felt the non-realization of their expectations. But it stands to reason that they would not have been so disappointed had they known the truth ; and therefore we may understand and make allowance for the erroneous views entertained by the primitive Christians respecting the second coming of the Messiah, the New Jerusalem, the Millennium, and various other subjects. They were men like ourselves ; and we have witnessed how, even with the 'lights' of the nineteenth century, the birth of Shiloh, the imminent approach of the Millennium, the immediate personal appearance of our Lord, and other fancies, are as fervently and devoutly believed by professors of Christianity at the present day, as they were by the members of the early Church, on whose authority and after whose example they have been accepted,—not to speak of the host of monstrous modern opinions and practices, for which most Christians cannot perceive any warrant in the Scriptures or in the early history of Christianity.

Instead of commencing his preaching in the place where he had been brought up, if not born, Jesus went and dwelt in the neighbouring town of Capernaum, on the coast of the Sea of Gennesareth, now called the Bahr Huleh, or Lake of Tiberias. The precise position of Capernaum is not known, there being a question of its identity with the two places named Khan Minyeh and Tel Hum, the preponderance of evidence seeming, however, to be in favour of the latter.

At Capernaum Jesus soon gathered about him a few disciples ; and from thence he ‘went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Good Tidings of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria ; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those that were lunatic, and those that had the palsy ; and he healed them : and there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judaea, and beyond Jordan’*. ‘And there went out a fame of him through all the region round about ; and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all’†.

It was not without reason that the people were astonished at our Lord’s doctrine ; ‘for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes’‡ : that is to say, he spoke as from himself and on his own responsibility, well knowing that what he said was true, and therefore did not need to be presented to his hearers in the words or on the authority of some Rabbi of reputation, as was the custom with Jewish teachers. Regardless of their Master’s example, Christian divines have preferred to follow that of the Jewish Rabbis ; seeming to imagine that they can make white to become black, and black white, by heaping up piles of ‘authorities,’—writers who, during ages, have repeated the same errors one after the other, till by dint of repetition they have brought themselves to imagine they are speaking the truth. Our Lord taught the direct contrary : he spurned and despised all such

* Matth. iv. 23–25.

† Luke iv. 14, 15.

‡ Matth. vii. 29.

'blind leaders of the blind'; and like every opposer of the received 'authorities' in all countries and of all creeds, he drew down upon himself the animosity of the Jewish clergy, with their adherents the Scribes and Pharisees, that is to say, the whole clerical party of the nation.

But in the same proportion as the Jewish reformer was hated by the priests and their party, he was admired and followed by the common people, with whom the great charm of his preaching, and a main cause of its going so directly home to their hearts, was the fact that he taught in parables or fables and in emphatic intelligible precepts, rather than by the enunciation of abstract doctrines, and least of all by any theological or metaphysical subtleties, with which the clergy mystify and delude their hearers.

In a former chapter* it has been shown that Jesus was not of low extraction, the illiterate son of a working-carpenter, but a young man of good social position and education. This subject will now be further considered with reference to the bearing that his condition of life had on the manner in which he carried out his mission.

Had our Lord been a person of low degree, like George Fox, John Bunyan, or any of the numerous other pious and well-intentioned uneducated itinerant preachers of our own times, he might in the first instance have expected to meet with nothing but contumely, and probably ill treatment. Instead of this, we find him preaching in the synagogues, invited into the houses and to the tables of wealthy Pharisees and receivers of customs, and even treated with respect by his very opponents of the clerical party, who, however much they may have hated him, are represented as behaving towards him with the respect due to a person holding a superior rank in society†. So too, the terms in which he was addressed by the Roman centurion‡ prove him to have been a man of distinction.

The manner, also, in which the first disciples of Jesus responded

* Chapter VIII. page 91 *et seqq.*

† See Matth. xxvi. 6; Mark ii. 15; Luke vii. 36, xi. 37, xiv. 1, xix. 5, &c.

‡ Luke vii. 6-8.

to his call, is quite irreconcilable with the supposition of his having been a mere working mechanic. Walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, who were fishermen, casting a net into the sea. On his simply saying to them ‘follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,’ they straightway left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further he saw two other brothers, James and John, who were with their father Zebedee mending their nets. He called to them likewise, and they immediately left the ship and their father with the hired servants, and followed him*. Then he saw Levi or Matthew, the publican or tax-gatherer, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and on his simply saying to him ‘follow me,’ that official also arose and followed him†. Now Matthew was notoriously a man well-to-do in the world, he being a representative of the wealthy ‘Publicani,’ or receivers-general of the revenue, under the Roman Empire ; and the other four, or at all events the two sons of Zebedee, must have been any thing but the ‘poor’ fishermen they are usually represented as having been ; for the latter (at least) had their ‘hired servants.’ But let the rank of all these persons have been what it may, they are not likely to have been induced to follow at the first call a person of inferior position in life, who, however zealous and able as a preacher, had not yet shown any public signs of his divine mission. For it must always be borne in mind that at that early period our Lord had not in any manner manifested himself as the Messiah, from the establishment of whose Kingdom his adherents might expect to derive benefit ; so that this inducement was wanting. But the well-known character of Jesus the builder, as a philanthropic and religious enthusiast, going about preaching the Kingdom of Heaven and seeking the spiritual welfare of his countrymen, even though he might then no longer possess the means of alleviating their temporal wants and necessities, may well have induced enthusiastic men of respectability like himself to attach themselves to him.

We shall doubtless be not far from the truth if we compare

* Matth. iv. 21, 22; Mark i. 19, 20.

† Matth. ix. 9.

Jesus with preachers like John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, well-educated men occupying a respectable position in life. The comparison may likewise serve in other respects; for like those pious ‘Methodists,’ and especially like the one last named, our Lord must have possessed an eloquence which is but faintly reflected in the reports we possess of his discourses, and of which, indeed, no proper idea could be conveyed in writing, except by describing the effect it produced on his hearers. It is well known how completely this was the case with Whitefield’s preaching, which is of too recent a date and too well authenticated to be open to any question, as may be that of his Master, of whom he was the humble and imperfect imitator. We hear of crowds of hearers, thousands and tens of thousands, who, hour after hour, at all times of the day and night, and in all weathers, used to listen enraptured to the fervent words that issued from his lips, regardless of hunger and thirst, and seeking only to be filled with the bread of life, which he was never weary of distributing among them. His preaching-tours through all parts of the country assumed the character of triumphal processions. It has been said that probably no other preacher ever impressed his hearers with such an overpowering conviction of his disinterested love as Whitefield did; but in saying this the example is forgotten of the Master whose doctrines he taught, and whose example he so earnestly strove to imitate,—like that Master unceasingly labouring among the ignorant and the depraved for no earthly gain or selfish end, and like him meeting with the opposition of the established clergy, who, had they been actuated by the true spirit of the religion of which they were the appointed teachers, ought only to have been stimulated to follow his example.

Indeed the life of him who has with reason been styled the Chrysostom of England, more closely represents that of the founder of Christianity than the conduct of such men as Francis of Assisi, so wrongly set up as the noblest and most ‘Christ-like’ among the multifarious ‘Saints’ of the Romish Church. That fanatic is said to have imitated so servilely the mistaken ideal of his Lord as to copy him even in his ‘stigmata,’ the marks

of the wounds he received when on the Cross ; and the supposed transcendental virtue of this ‘ Saint ’ consisted in self-denial and mortification of the body, carried to such an excess as to lead him to insist on intellectual not less than material poverty as absolutely essential to the real follower of ‘ Christ.’ ‘ The true brother of the order,’ wrote this pious but most misguided ascetic, ‘ must lay aside not only worldly prudence, but even all knowledge of letters ; so that, thus stripped of all things, he may come to see what is the power of the Lord.’

How entirely differently the life of Jesus was spent is shown in his own remark : ‘ John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of tax-gatherers and violators of the law’* : for such were they who are called ‘ sinners ’ in the Gospels ; not because they were necessarily persons of dissolute conduct,—though some may have been so,—but because they were offenders against the Levitical law, or more probably against the absurd traditional glosses with which that law had been hedged, and who were therefore regarded as ‘ sinners ’ by the priests and by their followers the Scribes and Pharisees.

These sinners doubtless sat as easy under this imputation as many ‘ sinners ’ among Christians do at the present day. A few years ago, a Church of England missionary coming home from India in a steamer carrying some sixty or seventy British passengers of respectability, sanctimoniously asserted that among them all he had found only two ‘ Christians,’ the rest being unregenerate ‘ sinners.’ But, according to our Lord’s teaching, this Pharisaical missionary had more the heart of a sinner than the Indian ‘ publicans,’ or revenue-officers, and others, who were his fellow-passengers on board ship.

In pursuance of his determination not to make himself prematurely known as the Messiah, Jesus preached only the Kingdom of Heaven, and inculcated the repentance of sins, and those lessons of pure religion and morality with which the pages of

* Matth. xi. 18, 19.

the first three Gospels are replete. But an accidental occurrence on a visit which he made to Nazareth, his native place, after he had been residing some time at Capernaum, was near upon frustrating his well-ordained plan.

As his custom was, he attended divine service in the synagogue ; and being an educated member of the congregation he stood up to read, in accordance with the ordinary practice of the synagogue. To perform his task the reader must of necessity possess a knowledge of the Hebrew language, the ‘lisan-hakkadosh’ or ‘sacred tongue,’ sufficient at least to enable him to recite the lesson fluently and intelligibly, which presupposes a certain amount of education ; and this in the case of Jesus comes in corroboration of the opinion that his social position was far above that of the humble mechanic. The intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures displayed by him in his intercourse with the Scribes and Lawyers, both Pharisees and Sadducees, is also thus naturally and reasonably accounted for.

The portion of Scripture read by Jesus on this occasion was the sixty-first chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. It was not selected by himself ; but, according to usage, the Roll was brought from the ‘tabot’ or ‘Ark,’ and the place of the proper lesson having been found, the Roll was delivered into the hands of Jesus, who read as follows :—‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to the bound : to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord’*.

Though this much only is cited (in somewhat different language) in Luke’s Gospel † as having been read, it may be presumed that Jesus did not leave off here, but finished the whole chapter, which is but a short one. This portion of Scripture is generally understood as having express reference to the Messiah, and it has therefore been contended that by reading it Jesus

* Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.

† Luke iv. 18, 19.

revealed himself in that character. It might have been so had he himself selected the lesson; but this was not the case. That he should have been called on to read this particular chapter of Isaiah was only a remarkable coincidence, whether it be regarded as the result of a special Providence, or merely as a matter of accident or chance, as it is called.

When he had finished reading the lesson, Jesus closed the book and gave it again unto the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him*. After this it may be presumed, though it is not mentioned in the Gospel, that, like as Paul was called on in the synagogue at Antioch†, it was said unto Jesus, ‘If thou hast any word of exhortation for the people, say on;’ and that thereupon he stood up, and, beckoning with his hand, said ‘Shema’ Israel—ye men of Israel, give audience,’ and commenced his discourse. With respect to this the Gospel narrative states, ‘And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears;’ on which his hearers are said to have wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of the mouth of their young townsman, whom they so well knew as ‘the builder’ and as ‘Joseph’s son’‡. But when he went on and compared himself to the prophets Elijah and Elisha, they became filled with wrath at his boldness, and attempted to kill him. However, he managed to extricate himself from their hands, and passing through the midst of them, he went his way and returned to Capernaum, where he resumed his preaching in the synagogue, and whence he extended his sphere of action, with the aid of the twelve disciples whom he had gradually induced to join him.

In the first chapter of the fourth Gospel, after the circumstantial relation of how John the Baptist bore record of his having been an eye-witness of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus in the form of a dove §, it is added that on the next day John was standing with two of his disciples (one of them was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother), and that, looking upon Jesus as he walked,

* Luke iv. 20.

† Acts xiii. 15.

‡ Luke iv. 21, 22.

§ See above, Chapter X. page 124.

the Baptist said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou ? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day ; for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jonah ; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone.’ —*ο ἐρυγνεραι Πέτρος* *

Now, although this is a matter of secondary importance, it is most improbable that it was at this early period that Jesus gave to his unstable disciple the surname of ‘Kepha’ or Cephas (*Κηφας*), by which Jewish name, or rather by the derived Greek name *Petros* or Petrus, he is best known. And this name is incorrectly asserted to be, ‘by interpretation, A stone’; for the signification of *אָרֶן*, which is the corrupted Jewish form of the Hebrew *אָרֶן*, is *περπα*—‘a Rock’; or, if the final *וֹ* be the definite article, then ‘*the Rock*’! No doubt the proper name *Petros*, ‘Petrus’ was formed from *περπα*, just as the name ‘*Aθανασιος*’ ‘Athanasius’ is formed from *ἀθανασία* ‘immortality,’ and ‘*Anastasios*’ ‘Anastasius’ from *ἀναστάσις* ‘the resurrection’; but no one acquainted with the Greek language would pretend that the names Athanasius and Anastasius themselves were by interpretation ‘immortality’ and ‘the resurrection’ respectively. The assertion, then, that ‘Cephas is, by interpretation, A stone,’ is alone sufficient to show that the fourth Gospel was not written by a Jew, and consequently not by the Apostle whose name it so falsely bears.

But, apart from this, the whole passage that has just been quoted from the first chapter of the fourth Gospel, is so entirely

* John i. 36-42.

opposed to the statements in the other three Gospels that it must be rejected. It is impossible to ‘harmonize’ them, unless by the help of that blind faith in ‘authorities’ which will, at one and the same time, believe in two directly contrary assertions respecting one and the same thing. The lover of truth for its own sake has therefore no alternative but to declare unreservedly that the assertion in the fourth Gospel, that Jesus was revealed to his disciples from the very outset, cannot be—is not—true. The Baptist did not make Jesus known to Andrew as ‘the Lamb of God;’ neither did Andrew make Jesus known to Simon Peter as the Messiah. From the statements in the three historical Gospels it is indisputable that it was not till a later date that Simon Peter first gave utterance to the conviction of himself and his companions, that their Master was ‘the Messiah, the Son of the living God’*. The ‘Lamb of God’ was the notion of a much later period.

It may further be affirmed that, down to the time of the occurrence in the synagogue at Nazareth which has just been narrated†, the thought that Jesus was the Messiah had not suggested itself to anyone. Neither was it in that character that our Lord enlisted his disciples into his service. They were attracted to him by his well-merited reputation, by his eloquence, and not improbably by the prospect of the temporal advantages likely to accrue to them as the assistants of so good and so popular a preacher—in the hope, perhaps, of being able to tread in his footsteps. ‘Follow me,’ said he to the two fishermen, Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, ‘and I will make you fishers of men’‡. And as concerns John the Baptist, it was not till long afterwards, whilst Jesus was still only regarded as a preacher of the Kingdom of Heaven like John himself, that some of the disciples of the latter, who could not reconcile with their master’s teaching the manner in which Jesus and his disciples lived, (which the sanctimonious regarded as profane and sinful,) came to him and asked, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?’ To this his answer was, ‘Can the children of

* Matth. xvi. 16.

† See above, page 143.

‡ Matth. iv. 19.

the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them ? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast' *.

Here was a foreshadowing of the truth, but still no revelation of it. When this answer of Jesus was repeated to John, as doubtless it was, it must have given him serious cause for reflection. At the baptism of Jesus, he had felt himself to be in the presence of one who was much his superior, one on whom more than a twofold portion of the Holy Spirit had descended. Even at that time the suspicion may have arisen in his mind as to his penitent's real character; and this suspicion may have almost ripened into conviction, when the answer made by Jesus to his disciples was repeated to him. But that this conviction was not absolute, is manifest from the message he himself sent to Jesus from his prison, shortly before he was put to death by Herod. Having heard of the works of Jesus, (in the Gospel it is inconsiderately put 'the works of Christ,' which plainly shows the late date of the writing,) he sent two of his disciples to ask him, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' †, which message could not possibly have been sent had John already recognized Jesus as the Messiah. The answer returned by our Lord, like all his sayings at the commencement of his mission, was ambiguous. It might be understood to imply the fact, but it did not express it. This was only another instance of the wisdom of the serpent joined to the harmlessness of the dove.

Nevertheless, from the totally different character of his mission from that of the Baptist, and from the almost unequivocal assertion now made by Jesus respecting John, 'If ye will receive it, this is Elijah, who was to come' ‡, the conviction of his hearers could hardly fail to be that he himself was the Messiah, whom that prophet was expected to precede; and hence it was manifest that the moment was close at hand when he must positively reveal himself in his true character. Indeed, in spite of his desire not to make himself yet known, he was beginning to

* Matth. ix. 14, 15.

† Matth. xi. 3.

‡ Matth. xi. 14.

be recognized; for we read that ‘devils also came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak, for they knew that he was the Messiah’*,—which statement, even though it must to a certain extent be regarded as legendary, has evidently a foundation in fact; inasmuch as we read also in the second Gospel that he ‘suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him,’ or, as it is otherwise rendered, ‘to say that they knew him’†. And we know further, that the disciples themselves had began to suspect him, saying to him, ‘Of a truth thou art the Son of God’‡, that is to say, the Messiah.

This state of things could not be allowed by Jesus to continue, because there was the greatest danger of its leading to his being some day publicly acclaimed by the people as the Messiah,—the Anointed King of prophecy,—the long-looked-for Deliverer of Israel; and any such popular demonstration, even though unaccompanied by any overt act of rebellion, could hardly have failed to bring him into collision with the Roman authorities. And as this was precisely what it was our Lord’s object to avoid, his only resource was to put an effectual check upon the exuberant zeal of his followers by avowing himself to be the Messiah, but at the same time letting them know most distinctly, even at the risk of losing some of them, how greatly they were mistaken in imagining him to be likely ever to possess, or even to lay claim to, the temporal throne of his ancestor David.

The manner in which the revelation was brought about is thus recorded in the first Gospel. Some time after the Baptist’s death, when Jesus was with his disciples at or near the city of Cæsarea Philippi, not far from the sources of the Jordan, he put to them this direct question: ‘Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?’ And they said, ‘Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ To this Jesus replied, ‘But whom say ye that I am?’ In reply to which question Simon Peter made his memorable asseveration, ‘Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus

* Luke iv. 41.

† Mark i. 34.

‡ Math. xiv. 33.

answered and said, ‘Blessed art thou Simon bar Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven’*.

This declaration of our Lord is supposed to have been intended to convey a special blessing to the Apostle for his penetration in making this most important discovery; whereas the fact is that the words in question are nothing more than an emphatic and hyperbolical mode of expression, such as a native of Palestine might use at the present day, having no more special application, and being no more intended to convey an absolute blessing, than the words addressed by Jesus to the same Apostle in almost the same breath—‘Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me’†—were intended to convey a curse.

Let a similar occurrence be supposed to happen at the present day among the Mohammedan inhabitants of the same country. One of them having a secret, which the other guesses, would, as a matter of course, exclaim ‘Mashallah!—‘What has God willed?’ in revealing to you my secret; or perhaps ‘Alhamdulillah,’—‘To God be the praise,’ for having enabled you to know it. The thought of attributing any credit personally to the guesser of the secret would not enter into the mind of the speaker‡. In what, then, does this differ from Jesus’s exclamation, which, however it may present itself to the minds of Europeans, especially in the Greek translation, from which the spirit of the original expressions has evaporated, was, at the most, a compliment to Simon Peter on his discernment? Though this, after all, was not very remarkable; for, as has just been seen, the ‘devils’ had anticipated him!

But in truth, it was not because of his cleverness that Jesus expressed his approval of Simon’s conduct, but rather on account of his readiness in having, through his promptitude and excess of zeal, brought the matter at once to a point, and so saved all need of further explanation. For this our Lord had reason enough to express his thanks to his disciple. But here, again, it is not

* Matth. xvi. 13-17.

† Matth. xvi. 23.

‡ See, to the like effect, a statement in Lane’s ‘Modern Egyptians,’ i. 322.

the practice of the natives of Judæa, and that part of the world generally, to express personal gratitude. Where we say, 'I thank you' for a favour or benefit received, the Arabian or Syrian, whether Mohammedan or Christian, exclaims, 'Kattir kheirak'—' May He (the Almighty) increase your welfare ;' and having thus thrown the burden of gratitude upon God, the speaker troubles himself personally no further about it.

But the supposed blessing of Simon Peter does not end with the words already cited ; for, immediately following them, and as if forming a continuation of such blessing, is the further declaration of our Lord, on which the Church of Rome so unwarrantably pretends to establish its supremacy over all Christendom. The words, as given in the Authorized English Version are :—‘And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’*.

As the first portion of this passage involves some important grammatical questions affecting its entire meaning, it is necessary to give the words of the original Greek, which are as follows :—Κάγω δε σοι λεγω ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπι ταυτῷ τῇ πετρᾷ οἰκοδομησα μου τὴν ἑκκλησίαν.

Now, in discussing these words, it has in the first place to be remarked, that the conjunction *καὶ δε*, with which the sentence commences, is most incorrectly translated ‘and also.’ For this conjunction is clearly not simply copulative, but is also adversative ; and its well-known meaning is ‘and yet,’ ‘but also,’ ‘nevertheless,’—not ‘and also.’ This error is not confined to the English version alone, but prevails in the Vulgate, where the copulative conjunction ‘et’ is used, and likewise in all modern versions, which, without exception, have the equivalents of either ‘and’ or ‘and also.’

The cause of this palpable error, which any lexicon will suffice to show, is that our Lord’s apostrophe in the preceding verse

* Matth. xvi. 18, 19.

having been understood to convey a substantive blessing, the following verse was read as if continuing and completing the same blessing, and hence it was considered necessary that it should be connected with what precedes it by means of the copulative and not the adversative conjunction; because this latter would have been as inconsistent with the context as so understood, as it will be found to be consistent with the same in the sense now attributed to it.

But there is a still greater error, which exists not only in all the versions, but, strangely enough, in the Greek text itself, which, whether the whole Gospel was or was not originally written in that language, must, as regards at least this particular passage, be a translation from the vulgar Jewish language,—‘Syro-Chaldaic’ as it is unmeaningly called by some scholars*,—which was spoken in Judæa in the time of Jesus, and which our Lord himself spoke, as is evident by his address to the daughter of Jairus, ‘Talitha kumi’†, and by his last words on the Cross, ‘Eloi ! Eloi ! lamà sabákhthani ?’‡.

The author of the first Gospel in its existing form, who must necessarily have translated our Lord’s words into Greek out of the Jewish language in which they were spoken, evidently did not appreciate the antithesis between the two parts of the sentence,—‘Thou art Kepha (the Rock),’ and ‘on this Keph (Rock);’ which antithesis requires the intervening conjunction τ , of the language in which Jesus spoke, to be translated $\delta\epsilon$, meaning ‘and yet’ or ‘but,’ instead of $\kappa\alpha\iota$, which signifies simply ‘and.’

The frequent use of the Hebrew conjunction τ in an adversative sense is known to grammarians, though it may not be so well understood by the generality of Biblical scholars. It may

* Down to the time of Gesenius, and even later, the so-called ‘Chaldee’ language was supposed to be the eastern, and ‘Syriac’ the western representative of the ancient Hebrew. Recently the two designations have clandestinely (*unter der Hand*) changed places! See Dr. A. Merx, in the ‘Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft,’ Bd. xii. (1868), s. 271. Therefore ‘Chaldee’ is merely the corrupted native ‘Hebrew’ of Judæa.

† Mark v. 41.

‡ Mark xv. 34.

here be illustrated by means of the following familiar examples:—The first command to Adam was, ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, *and* (yet) of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it’*. In this passage the simple conjunction *וְ* of the Hebrew text would mean *καὶ*; yet the Septuagint version properly translates it adversatively *δε*, meaning ‘but,’ as in fact we see it in our English and other versions. So too, in the fourth Commandment of the Decalogue, ‘Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, *and* (yet) the seventh day is the Sabbath’†, the Hebrew text has the same adversative *וְ*, which is correctly rendered in the Greek *δε*, and in the English ‘but.’

The Greek translators were not, however, always so happy; for they frequently translated the *וְ* by *καὶ*, where the sense is clearly adversative. For example, in the prophecy of Balaam, from which the pseudo-Messiah Bar Coeaba—‘the Son of the Star’—assumed his name, it is said, ‘I shall see him, *and* (yet) not now: I shall behold him, *and* (yet) not nigh’‡; where, in both cases, the Hebrew text has *וְ*, but the Greek version has wrongly *καὶ*. Again, at the commencement of Solomon’s Song occurs the passage, ‘I am black, *and* (yet) comely’§, which the Greek in like manner renders with the simple copulative *καὶ*. It is remarkable that in both these cases the Latin Vulgate corrects this error of the Greek Septuagint, by putting ‘sed’ instead of ‘et;’ and the English and other versions follow this example. Had the Latin Vulgate translated the *καὶ* in the passage of the first Gospel now under consideration by ‘sed,’ as it has translated it in those of Numbers and Canticles, it would have given the correct meaning of our Lord’s words; but it would at the same time have seriously affected the claim of the Church of Rome in right of St. Peter.

It is, however, quite certain that the *וְ* in our Lord’s address to Simon Peter ought properly to have been translated *δε*, ‘*and yet*,’ or ‘*but*,’ instead of *καὶ*, ‘*and*;’ so that the words of Jesus may be freely paraphrased as follows:—‘Thou art Rock by name,

* Gen. ii. 16, 17. † Exod. xx. 9, 10. ‡ Numb. xxiv. 17. § Cant. i. 5.

though not by nature; for thou shalt forsake me and deny me. *But I am the true Rock, and it is on this rock, namely, myself, that I will build my Church.* It is of this same Rock—*η ἀπόστολος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*—that Paul speaks in his first Epistle to the Corinthians*; and on it he declares that he also, as a wise architect, has laid the foundation for others to build thereon,—‘for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus the Messiah’†. So, too, the Ephesians, in the same Apostle’s Epistle to them, are declared to be ‘built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus the Messiah himself being the chief corner stone’‡. And even in the first Epistle attributed to St. Peter himself, it is said, ‘Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded’§,—applying to the Messiah the words of Isaiah xxviii. 16.

The discussion of this most important passage in the first Gospel has thus far proceeded on the assumption that our Lord did actually make use of the words attributed to him, but that their meaning has been misunderstood, and they have consequently been mistranslated. The like assumption will not, however, hold good with respect to the gift of ‘the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven,’ with the supernatural and exclusive powers accompanying the same. For, in the first place, this exclusive gift to Peter is incompatible with our Lord’s declaration to the disciples generally, ‘Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’||; and in the next place, both the gift to Peter alone, and that to the disciples collectively, are incompatible with the declaration of the ‘Alpha and Omega,’ seen by the writer of the Apocalypse in his vision, namely, ‘I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death’¶; and ‘the Lord’s’ further description of himself as ‘he that is holy, he that is true, he that

* 1 Cor. x. 4.

† 1 Cor. iii. 11.

‡ Eph. ii. 20.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 6.

|| Matth. xviii. 18.

¶ Revel. i. 18.

hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth' *.

The authenticity and authority of the Book of the Revelation was unquestioned in the earliest ages of Christianity, and therefore these expressions in it preclude the idea that, at the time when they were made use of, 'the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven' had been entrusted by their true owner to anyone else. This would indeed lead to the conclusion that not only the passage containing the gift of the Keys to Peter, but also that in which the gift is made to the disciples generally, are interpolations; but, without dwelling on this latter, it is sufficient to suggest that the pretended gift to Peter was made for the purpose of amplifying the mistaken idea that he was the Rock on which the Church of the Messiah was to be built.

It remains to be shown how the omission of this interpolated verse renders the narrative of the whole occurrence intelligible and consistent, not only with itself, but likewise with the statements in the other two historical Gospels.

Peter, having, in the name of himself and his companions, declared his Master to be the Messiah, the latter, in the idiom of his native tongue, commends and thanks him for so doing, and then continues—' Nevertheless I say unto thee that thou art the Rock by name; *and* (yet) it is upon this rock (pointing to himself) that I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; ' for I 'hold the keys of hell and death.' This is all our Lord said to Peter individually; and then, addressing himself to the disciples generally, he commanded them not to make known to the people what he still desired should be concealed from them.

The entire passage shall now be repeated in its amended form, in order that it may be seen how connected and consistent it is rendered by the omission of the interpolated verse:—' Nevertheless I say unto thee that thou art the Rock (by name); but (it is) upon this Rock (myself) that I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Then charged he his

* Revel. iii. 7.

disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Messiah.'

It is highly significant, as evidence of the interpolation contended for, that in the second and third Gospels Jesus's laudatory and declaratory address to Peter is omitted. All that we find there is, that in the former Peter declares Jesus to be 'the Messiah'*, and in the latter 'the Messiah of God'†—the Lord's Anointed; and that thereupon Jesus, without addressing Peter at all, forbade his disciples to make it publicly known. And it is still more significant that, whilst in the third Gospel Peter's subsequent rebuke of Jesus and the latter's animadversion of him are omitted, they are both inserted in the second Gospel‡, which Papias, who wrote about the beginning of the second century, says he was informed by the presbyter John was written by Mark, 'who, being Peter's interpreter, wrote with great accuracy whatever that Apostle remembered'§, and who, if duty required him to record what was so much to his employer's discredit, would surely not have left untold what was so decidedly to his honour and glory.

It has already been remarked how our Lord, in speaking of his Church being built on a rock, again readily availed himself of a builder's simile; but of course it is to be understood that it is not a material church or edifice that was so spoken of, but the *'Εκκλησία*—the assembly or congregation of the elect or called; like as 'the household of God' is declared by Paul to be 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus the Messiah himself being the chief corner stone'||.

In the fourth Gospel, as might be expected, the whole incident takes an entirely different form. As John the Baptist is therein said to have from the commencement proclaimed Jesus to be 'the Lamb of God,' and Andrew to have announced him as the Messiah to his brother Simon Peter¶, there was no necessity, or indeed opportunity, for the latter to make any express declaration to that effect. But after some mystical sayings on the part of

* Mark viii. 29.

† Luke ix. 20.

‡ Mark viii. 32, 33.

§ Euseb. 'Eccl. Hist.' iii. 39.

|| Eph. ii. 20.

¶ John i. 29, 41.

Jesus with reference to his own divine nature, it is stated that ‘From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter [who is represented merely as the spokesman of the little party] answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God’*. It is needless to dwell on the unreal character of this statement and its inconsistency with those in the other Gospels.

From a review of the whole subject it results that the three historical Gospels, taken together, record an historical fact, which, by a ‘pious fraud,’ has been ‘developed,—Peter’s part in what occurred having been gradually varied by the omission of our Lord’s reproof of him, and the insertion in its stead of a laudatory address; and this latter having been mistranslated and misunderstood, an opportunity was thereby afforded for the interpolation of the passage in which ‘the Keys’ are given to him who by that time had come to be regarded as being really that ‘Rock,’ which he was only by name.

That our Lord himself gave to Simon bar Jonah the surname of ‘Kepha’—‘the Rock’—seems not to be open to question, inasmuch as it is recorded in the second and third Gospels likewise†; but that he did not apply that name to him as indicative of his personal character, must be equally certain. Notwithstanding his fervent and exuberant zeal, the marked defect of Simon Peter’s character was inconstancy and want of firmness, as is not only evinced in the Gospel history, but likewise in his vacillating conduct with respect to the Gentile converts, for which the more steadfast Paul ‘withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed’‡. His Master then, who so well knew Simon’s weakness, and even reproached him for it, would surely never have likened him to a rock, unless it were on the principle of ‘lucus a non lucendo.’ It is therefore more likely that the surname was given for some other reason, which we have not been made acquainted with, and are not now able to divine.

* John vi. 66–69. † See Mark iii. 16; Luke vi. 14. ‡ Gal. ii. 11.

The possession by Simon Peter of such a significant surname, coupled with the unquestionable fact that he was the first of the twelve disciples who joined Jesus, and that throughout the entire history he seems to have asserted his priority, and to have acted as spokesman and chief of the little party,—though only as ‘*primus inter pares*,’—may have given rise to the legend of his being ‘the Rock,’ through an attempt to explain this singular cognomen; just as the monument erected to the ‘*Genius loci*’ in the park at Weimar, has given rise to the legend of the baker who killed the serpent with poisoned cakes, related in a former Chapter*.

In conclusion, it must be remarked that the Church of Rome is not entitled to the doubtful merit of having originated this legend respecting its patron Saint; for the same dates from a period when the Western Church was too weak to have possessed the power to introduce into the first Gospel a clause according to St. Peter such preeminence and exclusive authority. Besides, it exists in all Greek manuscripts. The interpolation must therefore be attributed to one of the Eastern Churches, during that mysterious period of which we possess no certain memorials, but which, on account of the otherwise inexplicable darkness that envelopes it, must have been one when events of an exceptionable character occurred, which would not bear the light, and which it was incumbent on the leaders of the ‘Church’ then struggling into existence—it may even have been essential to that existence—to bury in total oblivion. That the Romish clergy should afterwards have gladly availed themselves of this pious fraud, and further developed the legend by making Simon ‘the Rock’ to have been the first Bishop of a city in which he never set foot, is no more than might be expected from the members of an establishment whose existence has always been mainly dependent on systematic fraud and imposture.

* Chapter IV. page 55.

CHAPTER XIII.

JESUS THE MESSIAH.

FROM the notification in the first Gospel of a specific moment when Simon Peter, as the mouth-piece of the twelve disciples, declared their belief that their Master was the Messiah, it is manifest that Jesus had not previously made himself known to them in that character, although they may long have had their suspicions on the subject. But when once they had come to recognize him in his true character, it became necessary that he should at the same time endeavour to efface from their minds the erroneous impressions that would naturally have resulted from that recognition, owing to the mistaken notions entertained by them, in common with the rest of their countrymen, respecting the Messiah and his Kingdom. This he did by explaining to them, most distinctly and equivocally, that he was not come in the character of a conqueror and restorer of the temporal kingdom of his ancestor David, but as ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief’*, about to suffer an ignominious death on the cross.

Accordingly we read that ‘From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day’†. How unwillingly the disciples received this intelligence may readily be understood. They were Jews, and, like the generality of their countrymen, they could not realize any idea of the Messiah but as a prince who was to restore the kingdom of Israel. That he should accomplish this by supernatural means would not have been surprising to them : they even looked for something of the sort. But a spiritual kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, —which was to be inaugurated by the violent death of its anointed sovereign, was something quite beyond their comprehen-

* Isaiah liii. 3.

† Matth. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31.

hension ; and so indeed it continued to be to them and to the generality of believers even after our Lord's death and resurrection.

Personally the twelve disciples had a more immediate cause for disappointment. They had not unreasonably looked forward to the advantages they would derive from their Master's exaltation ; and now he told them that he himself expected nothing but to be put to death ! His holding out to them that he was to be raised again from the dead on the third day, was but a poor satisfaction to them for the loss of their material expectations. How this announcement operated on the other disciples is not recorded ; but Simon Peter—the Prince of the Apostles, by name ‘the Rock,’ but in his nature ‘unstable as water,’ like Reuben, the first-born of the sons of Israel—he took his Master to task, and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘ Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee’! * He would not allow his Master to be anything but the occupier of the temporal throne of his ancestor David. But Jesus rebuked him almost in the very words he had made use of when tempted in the wilderness † : ‘ Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art an offence unto me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of man ’.‡

Notwithstanding this outburst of dissatisfaction on the part of Simon Peter, he still continued to follow his Master, as did likewise the rest of the twelve disciples, and so doubtless did many others. Still it may be looked on as certain that, when the true character of the Messiah’s Kingdom came to be known, many turned away from him as a visionary, and quitted him in disgust. Say what he would, happen what might, they had expected and calculated on his reigning in the body on earth. The transfiguration on the mountain, when he showed himself to the Apostles Peter, James, and John, in company with Moses and Elijah, may have been intended as an initiation into the mysteries of the true Kingdom, which at the time left but few traces on their minds, so difficult was it to obliterate their preconceived notions on the subject. Their worldly-mindedness is shown by

* Matth. xvi. 22 ; Mark viii. 32. † See above, Chapter XI. page 131.

‡ Matth. xvi. 23 ; Mark viii. 33.

the question put to our Lord almost immediately afterwards :— ‘At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?’ *—which drew forth one of his most impressive lessons. He called a little child unto him, and sat him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven’ †.

Little, however, did this avail. Their selfishness was still more plainly evinced at a later period by Simon Peter’s question, just after his Master had been giving them a lesson on the worthlessness, in a spiritual sense, of worldly riches. Then answered Peter and said unto him, ‘Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee! What shall we have therefore?’ ‡, which question, whilst manifesting how little he was deserving of the appellation of ‘the Rock,’ received an answer hardly satisfying to the spirit that had prompted it. Yet more, when Jesus had endeavoured to explain to them that they must not expect to be repaid in this world for all their sacrifices, nor to be rewarded according to their merits in their own estimation,—that the last should be first and the first last,—the mother of Zebedee’s children came asking, to the great indignation of the other ten disciples, that her two sons might sit, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, when he should come to his Kingdom §. If they were not to be his ministers and governors on earth, they might at all events look for seats of honour in heaven!

The most lamentable proof of the worldly and selfish spirit unfortunately but too prevalent among our Lord’s disciples is afforded by the conduct of the traitor Judas Iscariot. There is no ground for questioning his sincerity in the first instance. In attaching himself to Jesus he had been actuated by feelings similar to those of the other disciples,—conviction of the goodness of the cause, coupled with the expectation that his espousal of it

* Matth. xviii. 1.

† Matth. xviii. 3, 4.

‡ Matth. xix. 27.

§ Matth. xx. 20, 21.

would lead to some personal advantage, either material or moral : feelings which, more or less profound, more or less pure, more or less sincere, actuate all mankind, according to the character of the individual and the circumstances under which he may happen to be placed. His returning the thirty pieces of silver received from the high priest and elders must be looked on as a proof that he did not act from merely mercenary considerations ; and there is no valid reason for supposing him to have been a thief, as the writer of the fourth Gospel maliciously or ignorantly calls him *. Actuated by the same hopes of personal advantage that Peter, James, and John had manifested and been reprobated for, Judas was evidently of a more determined character than them all. He could not have been a man bad at heart, or he would hardly have been selected by our Lord as one of his intimate associates ; and if, previously to his fatal act of treachery, nothing good is said of him, there is, on the other hand, no record of anything bad against him, as there is in the case of the three Apostles just named.

If the conduct of Judas be contrasted with that of Peter, the difference is more in degree than in kind ; only there was far more lip-service with Peter. After volunteering the declaration, 'Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,' and then repelling his Master's sorrowful intimation of his approaching fault by the solemn asseveration, 'Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,' he fell fast asleep in spite of Jesus's repeated earnest desire that he should watch ; and when he woke, it was only to give the lie to his solemn pledge, by first forsaking his Lord and fleeing, and then returning to deny him in the vilest manner, first with an oath, and then with cursing and swearing † !

After all this, Peter went out and wept bitterly, and lived on to evince his weakness of character by his tergiversations, for which Paul, like his Master, had to withstand him to the face. Judas, a far more energetic and determined man, who perhaps under more favourable circumstances might have proved himself

* John xii. 6.

† Matth. xxvi. 33-74.

a better man than Simon Peter, was led in a moment of desperation to betray his Master ; but he, too, repented when, alas ! it was too late, and testified his repentance in the same energetic and determined manner. He cast down the blood-money he had received, and departed, and went and hanged himself*. In the parable of the lost sheep, our Lord's words are, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance'†. Is the miserable Judas alone to be denied the benefit of this gracious assurance ?

When Jesus revealed himself to his disciples, he had cautioned them not to make his true character publicly known. In the cures operated by him by what were looked on as supernatural means, —and it would be hazardous to decide how much in his nature and in his actions were really different from other men,—he in like manner expressly commanded them that what he had done was to be kept secret, lest the people should openly acknowledge him to be the Messiah. Still, in spite of all this, the belief that he was truly the long-expected Deliverer of Israel could not fail to gain possession of the public mind. 'Is not this the Son of David?'‡ exclaimed some persons. In like manner, then, as it had preshadowed itself to his mind long before in the wilderness §, so now he distinctly saw that the only means of avoiding a popular uproar and commotion, which might easily be construed by the Roman authorities into an overt act of sedition or rebellion, was to begin a religious conflict with the heads of the Jewish Church. His altercations with the Scribes and Pharisees had already become more frequent and more embittered. At the outset his opponents had been satisfied with depreciating him in public estimation by imputing his marvellous acts to necromancy, saying 'He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils'||. By-and-by, notwithstanding their incredulity, the Jewish clergy could not help entertaining the idea

* Matth. xxvii. 5.

† Luke xv. 7.

‡ Matth. xii. 23.

§ See above, Chapter XI. page 133.

|| Matth. ix. 34; xii. 24; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15.

that Jesus might possibly be what the common people generally were beginning to believe him to be ; and they therefore sought of him a sign,—a sign from heaven,—whereby they might be able to judge of the validity of his pretensions. But he returned them only an ambiguous answer, in his allusion to the prophet Jonah, the true sense of which they were unable to understand*.

This state of affairs had not long continued when the national feast of the Passover drew nigh, and Jesus plainly saw that this would be the opportune moment to bring about his self-sacrifice in the way fitted for the accomplishment of his mission on earth,—that is to say, by making the Temple of the Almighty at Jerusalem the arena of a mortal combat between him and his enemies; the result of which would be, that he would lay down his life in the character of the suffering Messiah, in battle with the spiritual heads of the Jewish nation; not in that of a pretender to the temporal throne of his ancestor David, and as such a rebel against the Imperial Majesty of Rome. Accordingly he made preparations for his journey to the capital; and departing from Galilee, he came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan, taking the road down the valley of that river as far as opposite Jericho, instead of passing through Samaria and the hill-country.

Whilst on this journey there occurred another proof of how little the disciples even then understood their Master. We read that Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, ‘Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him ; and the third day he shall rise again.’ And what was their answer ? A dispute among them for the chief places in their Master’s Kingdom after his death† ! More than this is not recorded ; but more is not wanted to place their conduct and the motives for that conduct in the true light.

On this journey Jesus was accompanied not only by his disciples, but by a mixed multitude of Jews going up to Jerusalem

* Matth. xii. 38-41.

† See Matth. xx. 17-24.

likewise to keep the Passover. This visit to the capital was the first and only one made by our Lord. The statement in the fourth Gospel that Jesus visited Jerusalem more than once cannot be accepted as authentic. It would have been utterly impossible for him to have acted as he is recorded in all four Gospels to have done in cleansing the Temple*, without inducing the catastrophe which actually did occur, as soon as he took on himself to act in so offensive a manner. It was not merely a declaration of war, but it was the commencement of actual hostilities, for which the authorities of the Temple could not but instantly retaliate, as he meant to force them to do, and as we see they did.

Every step now taken by our Lord only brought him nearer to the wished-for goal. His Messiahship began to be generally recognized. The blind men by the way-side cried to him ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David’†, and his entrance into the city from Bethphage, seated on an ass, was perfectly triumphant. ‘A very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, ‘Save us, O Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Save us, in the highest’‡, which words are an adaptation of the 25th and 26th verses of the 118th Psalm:—‘Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord:’—these verses being familiar to the Jewish people, as forming part of the Great Hallel or Thanksgiving, which consists of that Psalm and the five preceding ones.

No wonder was it then that when our Lord was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee’§:—a question and answer which alone ought to be accepted as a proof that this must have been Jesus’s first visit to Jerusalem since his childhood, and that he was still unknown in

* Matth. xxi. 12, 13; Mark xi. 15-17; Luke xix. 45, 46; John ii. 13-16.

† Matth. xx. 31. ‡ Matth. xxi. 8, 9. § Matth. xxi. 10, 11.

that city until he was thus openly greeted as the Messiah, the Son of David.

Our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is recorded in slightly different terms in the three historical Gospels, and must be recognized as a fact. In the fourth Gospel it is omitted, because it brings Jesus too forward in his character of the Messiah,—as the Son of David, rather than as the Son of God,—which it was not in the spirit of that most mischievous document to acknowledge.

Immediately on his arrival in Jerusalem, ‘Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all those that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and children crying in the Temple and saying, Save us, O Son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’ *

M. Renan, in his entirely mistaken view of our Lord's character and course of action, looks upon his conduct in this respect as having been the result of over-excitement; whereas it was, on the contrary, the consequence of the utmost coolness and deliberation. Jesus's object in acting as he did was to bring himself at once into collision with the religious authorities of Jerusalem, and not with the Roman governor, who might easily have been brought to regard his triumphal entry into the city and the cries of the multitude as seditious acts, requiring to be instantly put down with a high hand. It was with the like object that Jesus did not remain in Jerusalem during the night, but ‘left them and went out of the city into Bethany, and he lodged there’ †,—his greatest care throughout being not to

* Matth. xxi. 12–16.

† Matth. xxi. 17.

commit, or to countenance, any act that might cause him to be arrested as a rebel or seditious ringleader.

On the following morning, Jesus returned into the city ; and in order that he might not collect a crowd and excite a tumult in the streets, and so give offence to the Roman authorities, he went straight to his own chosen arena. ‘ And when he was come into the Temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority dost thou these things ? and who gave thee this authority ? ’ To this he returned no direct answer, but said, ‘ I will also ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like manner will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John whence was it ? from heaven, or of men ? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him ? But if we shall say, Of men, we fear the people ; for all hold John as a prophet ’ *. The only way to avoid this dilemma was to reply, as Jesus intended they should reply, ‘ We cannot tell.’ On which he was justified, even in their own eyes, in answering them as he did, ‘ Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.’ And then he gave utterance to several biting parables, which, when the chief priests and Pharisees heard, they perceived that he spake of them. But though they would willingly have laid hands on him, they durst not do so, because they feared the multitude, who took him for a prophet †.

From what is here stated two things are evident. The first is that, while John the Baptist’s ministry was of long standing, that of Jesus himself was quite of recent date ; and secondly, this questioning by the chief priests and elders proves that they were surprised at the daring novelty of his conduct, and had not at all made up their minds how they ought to proceed against him ; though Jesus, by his parable of the householder, whose son the husbandmen killed ‡, plainly pointed out the course they would eventually pursue.

This course they were not long in adopting. ‘ Then went the

* Matth. xxi. 23-26. † Matth. xxi. 45, 46. ‡ Matth. xxi. 33-41.

Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk'*,—on matters not of doctrine, but of state, in the hope of getting him to speak seditiously against the Roman authorities. ‘And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of man. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?’ He saw plainly that the object of their question was to elicit an answer such as might enable them to denounce him to the Roman authorities as the utterer of seditious sentiments. But they were signally foiled in their attempt. He quietly desired them to bring him a denarius, a Roman coin in circulation in Judæa, and as such used by the Jews themselves to pay their tribute with, and doubtless for other purposes. And when it was brought, he asked them, ‘Whose is this image and superscription?’ They could only answer ‘Cæsar’s.’ Then gave he to them that memorable reply, which sums up and clearly defines the duty of every member of society:—‘Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.’ No wonder was it that when they heard this they marvelled, and left him, and went their way †.

The Pharisees being foiled in their attempt to lead Jesus to say unawares something that might have been repeated to Pilate as seditious, the Sadducees next beset him, putting questions to him with reference to the resurrection from the dead, which, after his own fashion, he successfully turned rather than answered, thereby only astonishing the multitude yet more ‡. And then the Pharisees, hearing how he had put the Sadducees to silence, returned to the attack; and one of them, a lawyer or scribe, asked Jesus what was the great commandment in the Law, which our Lord answered in the same orthodox manner as he had answered the pious scribe on a former occasion §.

* Matth. xxiii. 15.

† Matth. xxii. 16–22.

‡ Matth. xxiii. 23–33.

§ Mark xii. 29–31.

At length, as if tired with their importunity, Jesus, in his turn, became the questioner, and asked them, seemingly abruptly, ‘What think ye of the Messiah? whose son is he?’ To this there was only one answer to be given by them, namely, ‘David’s.’ Upon which he immediately followed it up with a second question, which they could not answer: ‘How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Adonai], Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool?’ And then, to mystify them yet more, he added, ‘If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?’ The Evangelist truly records that to this no man was able to answer him a word, and that neither from that day forth durst any man ask him any more questions *.

This question of Jesus has by some been understood to imply that, in his own opinion, the Messiah was not the Son of David. It does nothing of the sort. In itself, it cannot be made to signify more than that the Psalmist recognized the superiority of the Messiah in his spiritual Kingdom, above David, his ancestor, as a temporal sovereign. But it was not the object of Jesus to suggest this explanation. With the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, as witnessed on the former occasion when he posed them with his question respecting John the Baptist, his object was to silence them and send them away, wondering what he possibly could mean by asking such a question,—perhaps excogitating some sapient reply, to be given on the authority of some learned Rabbi as wise as themselves! For had they attempted to question him further, he had his answer ready:—‘First explain to me why David called the Messiah Lord, and then you shall be at liberty to question me.’

This questioning and cross-questioning, this playing with words, had however to be brought to an end. The supreme moment was now at hand. After many important conversations with the disciples, Jesus intimated to them that after two days would be the Passover, when he was to be betrayed and crucified †. On the other hand, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders

* Matth. xxii. 42–45.

† Matth. xxvi. 2.

of the people assembled together in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest ; and as they had failed in their attempt to make Jesus criminate himself, they consulted how they should cause his death by subtlety *, that is to say, as is shown in the sequel, by suborning false witnesses †. They were, however, of opinion that they should do nothing during the feast of unleavened bread, which lasted from the 14th to the 21st of Nisan, that is to say, during a whole week,—not on ‘the feast day’ only, as it is erroneously translated in the English Authorized Version ‡, —lest there should be an uproar among the people. But here the intervention of a traitor from the intimate circle of the disciples of Jesus caused them to alter their plan. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, ‘went unto the chief priests and said, What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him’ §.

Combining this statement with the account of what subsequently occurred, it is evident that Judas’s intention was not only that the arrest of Jesus should take place immediately, but also that he himself would be prepared to bear witness against his Master, by adducing some proof of his culpable intentions that would render him amenable to the civil and military authorities. And what he proposed was, that the arrest should take place directly after the Paschal supper, when Jesus was going out of the city to sleep according to his custom, and when there would not be many persons stirring.

To this act of treachery, as has already been explained, Judas was not led by merely mercenary motives ||. He saw but too plainly that the cause in which he had interested himself was irrevocably lost ; and the revulsion of feeling consequent on his disappointment, aided not improbably by the momentary desire to profit by what he did, led to his unprincipled conduct. This is not said in extenuation, but only in explanation of Judas’s conduct. How can we hope to understand the Scripture history,

* Matth. xxvi. 4. † Matth. xxvi. 59. ‡ Matth. xxvi. 5.

§ Matth. xxvi. 14–16. || See above, Chapter XIII. page 161.

unless, after making allowance for difference of country and differences of manners and customs, we look on the motives of men's conduct as having been then the same as they are now, and as they ever will be so long as the world continues as it is? If we look on saints as being always saints, and on sinners as always sinners, we shall form a very false estimate of man's real nature, and of his actions and the motives for them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.

AFTER centuries of almost universal implicit faith in the truth, in the most literal sense, of the events recorded in the four Canonical Gospels, which were believed to have been written under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, a tendency has manifested itself among theologians and biblical students during the present century to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures themselves, to question the supernatural character of the events recorded in them, and to endeavour to explain the same according to various systems of interpretation, all resulting, however, in the opinion that, as regards the laws of nature, as generally understood, such events formed no exception. In the case of our Lord Jesus in particular, the opinion has become very prevalent, and is apparently widely gaining favour, that he was a mere man, in no respect differing from other mortals, either in his birth, in his life, or in his death.

Such opinions, however erroneous they may be, ought not to be regarded as adverse by believers in Revelation; because by showing the futility of the objections that were once made to the fact of the personal individuality of our Lord Jesus, they supply additional arguments in favour of the historical truth of the Scripture History, and thus afford a vantage ground from which

such believers may safely and surely make the next great step towards the correct understanding of the Christian Dispensation. They are thereby placed in a position to say, that if our Lord's existence on earth be a fact,—if, after the severest and most adverse investigation, the main incidents of his life and the foundation of Christianity are proved to be true,—it is neither consistent nor logical to refuse credence to those portions of the history which appear to be of a supernatural character, for no other reason than that they are exceptional. It may be admitted that it would be equally illogical, though it might be consistent, to claim for all the details of that history the same amount of credibility as for the main facts themselves; but at all events these details ought not to be summarily rejected, even though some of them be what is vulgarly called 'miraculous.'

It is much to be regretted that such expressions as 'miraculous' and 'supernatural,' though convenient perhaps in common parlance, should be employed by scholars and divines. In the Universe everything is miraculous, as being beyond human comprehension: nothing is supernatural, or contrary to the laws of nature. For the only Supernatural is God, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe; and His will is the supreme Law of nature. It is He alone who can say—

'*Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas!*'

Man, with his limited intellect and faculties, is unable to comprehend fully the operations of that Will as manifested in the order of nature generally, and in the facts of history specially. But, whilst humbly and earnestly striving to pay implicit obedience to that Will as so manifested, he is not required to do so blindly or foolishly. On the contrary, it is his bounden duty to exercise, with the utmost care and diligence, the faculties with which he is endowed by his Creator, in order that he may be sure he does not deceive himself or others with respect to things which appear to him to be 'direct manifestations of the Divine Will, but which may in truth be only the vain imaginations of mortal and fallible men like himself. How many errors and

fallacies have been, and are still being, detected in the various departments of science, that is to say in the interpretation of the Will of God as manifested in His material laws. Take, for example, the most striking and most familiar phenomenon of nature, the rising of the sun, as in popular language it has been called throughout countless ages, and is still called even by astronomers; without, however, necessarily involving the belief that the sun actually rises in the east and sets in the west, till it was ignorantly and dogmatically declared to do so by the Church of Rome, and it thenceforth became heretical to believe in the truth!

With such an example before us, we are not merely justified in believing, but have reason to feel assured, that errors and fallacies have in like manner existed and still do exist in our faith, whether religious or otherwise, that is to say, in our interpretation of the Will of God as manifested in history. It is therefore the imperative duty of the true philosopher, the lover of Divine Wisdom, both in science and in religion, to continue his researches perseveringly and unflinchingly, with the humble conviction of how little he really knows, and how much he has yet to learn, but at the same time with the proud certainty that whatever he may earnestly and conscientiously be able to accomplish, will, with God's blessing, be so much gained to the cause of truth. It is for the sciolist and dogmatist, the scientific and religious quack—whether consciously deceiving others or unconsciously deceiving himself, God knows,—to pretend to infallibility.

Of all that has been written on the subject of the miraculous and supernatural, the far greater portion has been in vain, in consequence of the want of a previous definition of these terms, which has caused them to be continually understood and used in widely different senses. A miracle is not that which is supernatural in the sense of being contrary to nature absolutely; for this would be simply impossible. It is only what is relatively so, as being something beyond the comprehension of the observer, and out of the established order of nature, as far as his

limited knowledge or experience of the laws of nature extends; and the more limited that knowledge or experience is, so in the same proportion will miracles exist. He who knows no better holds ‘omne ignotum pro mirifico.’ The practical operation of this is, that the ignorant and credulous man is disposed, and far too often is encouraged by those whose duty it is to teach him better, to impute to some mysterious and inexplicable cause whatever is not appreciable by his reason; and thus he soon comes to believe in all sorts of impostures, and at length lives in an atmosphere of ‘miracles.’

The kindling of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, the ‘hocus-pocus’ of Transubstantiation, the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, the ‘winking’ Madonnas, and the host of ‘miracles’ in full operation at the present day in various parts of Christendom are lamentable proofs of the weakness and gullibility of the masses of mankind, and of the power which the crafty pastors exercise over their foolish and confiding flocks, whom they hold in this state of crass ignorance in order that they may fleece them the more easily and more closely.

But if such is the case with the credulous man, he that is incredulous errs almost, if not quite, as much in the opposite direction. From his own sceptical turn of mind in the first instance, and afterwards from witnessing the mischievous consequences of blind faith on the part of others, he is induced to generalize as incorrectly as those others do; and thus he declares to be false and impossible what to him is supernatural, that is to say, what is beyond the bounds of the laws of nature, as the same are more fully, but still imperfectly, known to and understood by him. For it is a contradiction in terms, a simple absurdity, to say that anything occurring in nature is *super-natural*. If it is an actual fact, it may be wonderful, marvellous, miraculous, inexplicable, incomprehensible,—it may even be singular, that is to say not recurrent,—but it cannot by any means be said to be impossible, inasmuch as it is a fact.

Neither ought a ‘singular’ occurrence properly to be called

incredible, simply because the amount of evidence adduced does not bring conviction to our mind. How often does it happen that what was deemed incredible and even un-natural yesterday, because it was then contrary to our preconceived notions and altogether inexplicable,—what was then imagined and even declared to have been *proved* to be impossible,—turns out to-day to be obvious, unquestionable, the most natural thing in the world, in consequence of some explanation of which it is found to be capable!

To say, then, that a thing *cannot* be, because we have no knowledge or experience of it, and do not understand it, is simply absurd. Professor Huxley, when speaking of the ‘Law’ of Gravitation, thus tersely places the question :—‘It is very convenient to indicate that all the conditions of belief have been fulfilled in this case, by calling the statement that unsupported stones *will* fall to the ground “a law of nature.” But when, as commonly happens, we change “will” into “must,” we introduce an idea of necessity, which assuredly does not lie in the assumed facts, and has no warranty, that I can discover, elsewhere. *Fact I know*, and Law I know; but what is this *necessity* but an empty shadow of my own mind’s throwing?’*

A philosopher of a different turn of mind cannot bring himself to say, ‘Fact I know.’ M. Renan asserts that ‘in the name of a constant experience he banishes miracles from history’†; by which he means everything that is not according to his own pre-conceived notions of the laws of nature. He supposes the case of a person claiming to possess the power of restoring a dead body to life. To test this, he requires a committee composed of physiologists, physicians, chemists, and historical critics. This committee should select a corpse, should assure themselves that it is really a dead body, should appoint a suitable place for the operation to be performed, should take all necessary precautions, so as to leave no room for doubt. If, under such circumstances, the dead body were brought back to life, it would not, even then, be a credible fact: there would only result ‘a probability almost equivalent to a certainty!'

* ‘Lay Sermons,’ p. 158.

† ‘Vie de Jesus,’ p. li.

Now, really, can anything be more illogical than this? Were it becoming to employ such a term with reference to so distinguished a scholar, it might be called perfectly childish. A stranger restores to life, under some most extraordinary, unprecedented, marvellous circumstances, a person drowned, for example, in the Serpentine river, when that person had been given over as dead by all the medical attendants. M. Renan would of course deny that this stranger had done so, and would call on him to operate on some other drowned person under different circumstances; and if he failed, it would be a proof that he could not have restored the former person to life, and that those who asserted he had done so were either impostors or credulous persons—knaves or fools!

If, however, it be insisted on that a person cannot be restored to life under exceptional, and it may be totally inexplicable, circumstances, surely it is only logical and consistent to contend in like manner that a person cannot be brought into life under abnormal circumstances. A prodigy like the Siamese twins not only could not, but *can not* possibly exist; still less the Christine-Milly monstrosity, the two-headed nightingale, possessing a sort of Erckmann-Chatrian dual-individuality. To this it will of course be answered that such instances are mere ‘*lusus naturæ*’; which means, if it means anything, that it is permissible to Dame Nature to play such freaks in violation of her own laws, but that the God of nature, ‘the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,’ is interdicted from making what appear to be exceptions to His own laws with respect to bringing His own creatures into existence or restoring them to life, though such apparent exceptions are the natural and inevitable results of other more general or more special laws, with which we are at present unacquainted.

The historian Herodotus records how the Phœnicians, or Tyrians, who had circumnavigated Africa, ‘related what to me (says he) does not seem credible, though it may to others, that as they sailed round Libya they had the sun on their right hand’*—that is to say, to the north of them at noon-day. Of course the Halicarnassian traveller himself was too wise to place any faith in

* Melp. 42.

such a fable ; but he philosophically left those to believe it who were foolish enough to do so. In like manner Galileo declared that the earth revolves round the sun : the clergy of Rome, who had the power to enforce their doctrines, made him eat his words and confess the immobility of the earth.

Endless examples might be adduced of the incredulity of those who dogmatize as to what must and what must not be, and who thereby demonstrate their own excessive credulity and ignorance in believing themselves alone to be self-sufficient and infallible ! What would become of society if such a principle were introduced into our courts of justice, and the jury were to deliver their verdict, not according to the evidence, but because a fact distinctly proved by the testimony of respectable and trustworthy eyewitnesses, was not explicable according to their own preconceived notions,—was not even according to the ‘laws of society,’ that is to say the order of things in well-regulated society ? This does, indeed, sometimes occur in the case of lady-shoplifters, who are acquitted, in defiance of proof positive, because it is ‘impossible’ for persons of their rank in life to have been guilty of such a crime !

After all, who shall put a limit to the knowledge that man may acquire of the secret powers and operations of the God of Nature ? Things which a few years ago would by the world generally, and by men of science especially, have been declared to be ‘old wives’ fables,’ poetical fictions, vain imaginations, have now become so much matters of fact, that they scarcely call forth a remark on their still *miraculous* character.

Our great English magician, that profound philosopher, that intuitive discoverer and expounder of the secrets of nature, makes one of his attendant spirits say—

‘I’ll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes’ *.

Had any man of science dared to speak in these terms even so lately as eighteen hundred years after the Resurrection of the Messiah from the dead was declared to be a fact by the great

* ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream.’

disciple of Gamaliel, he would have been answered, in the words of Festus to Paul, ‘much learning doth make thee mad.’ But at the present day will this vaunt of the tricksy Puck appear any longer a poetical fiction? On the contrary, we may expect that when, as may be looked for every day, an electric cable shall have been laid down between North America and China, and the entire circuit of the globe completed, the telegrapher will have it in his power to flash a message almost instantaneously round the world to the point of starting, so as to realize another of Shakespeare’s creations, when he makes his dainty Ariel say—

‘I drink the air before me, and return
Or e'er your pulse twice beat’*.

With this example before us, we should do well to bear in mind the practical rule to which the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare gives utterance by the mouth of Hamlet. When Horatio, on the appearance of the ghost, exclaims—

‘Oh day and night, but this is wondrous strange!’

the prince replies—

‘And therefore as a stranger give it welcome;’

—this being an exquisite allusion to the text of Scripture, ‘Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares’†. And then the great master makes his hero say—

‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’

As regards the miracles of which the performance is attributed to our Lord Jesus in the three historical Gospels,—those in the fourth Gospel have to be discussed separately,—the belief in them ought to depend not on their assumed compliance or non-compliance with some law of nature, known or unknown, but on the credibility of the witnesses who testify to them. Now the evidence of the writers of the three Gospels appears to be conclusive as to the fact that Jesus did really perform, or at all events was by common repute deemed to have performed, many most marvellous acts, which appear much more astonishing to us at the

* ‘*The Tempest.*’

† *Hebr. xiii. 2.*

present day than they appeared to those persons who were the eye-witnesses of them. So far, indeed, were the Scribes and Pharisees from seeing anything extraordinary or marvellous in the acts themselves, that they attributed them to the power of Beelzebub, or Satan *. And, according to the Scripture history, not only did Jesus perform what are now considered to be miraculous acts, beyond the power of man to perform, but his Apostles did the like, and so did other persons in his name who were not Apostles, and some even who were in opposition to him, the fact of their having done so being affirmed by the very writers who testify to the powers and acts of Jesus himself †.

Consequently no objection can be raised to such alleged miraculous acts on account of their singularity ; though, at the same time, it must be conceded that no conclusive argument in favour of the divine character of our Lord or of his mission can be founded on powers and acts which so many others are said to have possessed in common with him. But this is of little consequence. Our Lord himself did not at all ground his mission on his miraculous powers ; on the contrary, when the Pharisees, and also the Sadducees, came, and, tempting him, desired him that he should show them a sign from heaven, he replied that no sign should be given but the sign of the prophet Jonah ‡. To those who would not read and understand the signs of the times, signs from heaven would be of no avail. As Jesus said on another occasion, ‘ If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead ’ §. Indeed, so little value does our Lord himself appear to have attached to such acts, that after he had healed one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, ‘ he charged them that they should tell no man ’ ||. What need, then, have we to attribute more value to miraculous acts than our Lord himself did ? The truth of his mission is based on a totally different foundation.

* Matth. ix. 34, xii. 24; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15.

† See Matth. xii. 27; Mark ix. 38; Luke ix. 49; Acts viii. 9, xiii. 6, xix. 13-16, &c.

‡ Matth. xvi. 1-4; Mark viii. 11, 12. § Luke xvi. 31. || Mark vii. 36.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MIRACLES IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

ACCORDING to the established law of evidence, the miracles attributed to our Lord Jesus in the fourth Gospel alone, of which the other three Gospels exhibit no traces whatever, are ‘*prima facie*’ open to objection. At the very best they are exceptional, and therefore they require more proof than the unsupported assertion of the author of that document, whoever he may be. Further, the general equivocal character of that document renders all statements of facts contained in it open to grave suspicion, if not to warrant their rejection when unsupported by independent evidence. The objection to these statements on account of their ‘supernatural’ character would in itself be of no great weight, if only the testimony in favour of them were unimpeachable; but, under the circumstances, it necessarily helps to weigh down the scale against the authenticity of the alleged acts themselves.

The first of the ‘miracles’ of Jesus mentioned in the fourth Gospel, and nowhere else, is the turning of water into wine at the Marriage in Cana of Galilee *.

Now, if the narrative of this occurrence were met with anywhere but where it is, it would at once be classed with the puerile legends of the Romish, and yet more—though that is scarcely possible—of the Greek Church. It is an isolated incident, having not the slightest connexion with anything that precedes or follows it. Unlike the healing of the sick or the supplying of bread to the multitude in the wilderness, it was perfectly needless: in character it is quite different from all the beneficent acts of Jesus; it is inconsistent with his express refusal to give any sign of the authenticity of his mission; and it had no motive or object except the inconsistent and contradictory one alleged by the writer, that it ‘manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on him,’ just as the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples is supposed to tend to the greater glory of

* John ii. 1-11.

God, and to stimulate the belief of the ignorant and superstitious crowds that credulously witness it.

The following facts of contemporaneous profane history may perhaps furnish a clue to this pretended miraculous changing of water into wine at Cana. In the time of Pausanias, that is to say towards the latter end of the second century, soon after the time when the fourth Gospel may be supposed to have been written, the inhabitants of Elis celebrated in the following manner the visit which the god Dionysus, or Bacchus, was said to have made to their city. Three empty kettles were sealed by the priests, and placed in a vault, in the presence of citizens and strangers; and on the following day, on their being publicly opened, they were found to be filled with wine by the god's own hand, the prodigy or miracle being confirmed on oath by all present *. In the Island of Andros likewise, according to the same writer, wine flowed from the temple of the god Bacchus on his yearly festival; though Pliny only says † that on that day the water of the fountain there possessed the flavour of wine.

Now it is not to be imagined that the Gentile Christian priests of the first and second centuries would allow their unconverted brethren to have the monopoly of this miraculous supply of wine. If Bacchus could fill '*three* empty kettles' with wine, it would of course have been an easy matter for Jesus to change into the same generous fluid the contents of '*six* waterpots of stone, (set there) after the manner of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece !'

Unhappily the example of these '*pious*' forgers has been followed by their successors in all ages, as the history of the Romish Church too plainly shows; and it has been unconsciously copied in our days by the Franciscan friar who, when preaching on the Molo at Naples, and finding himself deserted by his fickle auditors for a rival '*Punch*' at the other end of the pier, drew the crucifix from the bosom of his frock, and holding it up at arm's length, exclaimed at the pitch of his voice, '*Ecco il vero Pulcinella!*'

* 'Græc. Descr.' vi. 26.

† 'Hist. Nat.' ii. 106.

A far more stupendous miracle than that at the marriage in Cana, is the raising of Lazarus from the dead, narrated most circumstantially in the eleventh chapter of the fourth Gospel.

As has already been explained, it is not on account of the miraculous character of this alleged occurrence that any objection will be raised against it. Let the fact be proved on unexceptionable or even reasonable testimony, and we are bound to believe it, like any other historical fact; only, on account of its exceptional character, it is essential that the testimony in support of it should be unimpeachable. But in this case, in addition to the objections raised to the pretended changing of water into wine at Cana, there are two other objections much stronger, and the latter of them apparently insurmountable.

The first of these objections is that this raising of Lazarus from the dead—not merely restoring him to life shortly after he had expired, but the absolute raising of him from death after he had lain ‘in the grave four days already,’—is said to have caused so great a sensation that ‘the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death’*. And yet this most remarkable, this altogether exceptional, event in our Lord’s life, that which is said to have occasioned the greatest sensation and to have led to his Crucifixion, is not in the slightest degree alluded to in any one of the historical Gospels, is not in any manner connected with any of the other occurrences therein

* John xi. 47–53.

related, and may indeed be said to be irreconcilable with the historical series of events !

The second and still greater objection is this. If the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead were a fact, then it preceded that of our Lord himself ; and if so, then is the preaching of St. Paul in vain, and our faith also is vain. For what does the Apostle say ? What do we not hear preached in our churches, and recited when we follow to the grave the remains of those we love ?—‘ Now is the Messiah risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in the Messiah shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order : the Messiah the firstfruits ; afterward they that are the Messiah’s at his coming ’*. If, then, the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead were a fact, it would be he, and not Jesus, that was the ‘ firstfruits of them that slept ’!

The writer of the fourth Gospel, in his desire to prove what was generally, but (as will be shown in the sequel †) far from universally believed, fabricated his story with a double object, first of proving the resurrection of the body from the dead by this palpable fact of its actual occurrence in the person of Lazarus, and secondly, of demonstrating the power of Jesus, as ‘ the Son of God,’ to perform a miracle equal in importance to that which was shortly afterwards to be performed on his own body by the power of the Almighty Himself. Only, as is usual in such cases, the writer has overshot his mark and proved too much ; because by making Lazarus, and not the Messiah, to be the first fruits of the Resurrection, he does away altogether with the peculiar character and merit of the Christian Dispensation. It seems impossible to overcome this objection to the authenticity of the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

It is deserving of most serious consideration that, just as Jesus at Cana is made to have changed the contents of ‘ six ’ water-pots into wine, whilst Bacchus at Elis filled only ‘ three ’ empty kettles, so here at Bethany our Lord is said to have raised

* 1 Cor. xv. 20-23.

† See Chapter XX.

Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave ‘four days,’ whereas his own resurrection by the power of the Almighty was on the third day, after he had remained in the sepulchre only *two* days! Hardly can this coincidence, showing the supreme power of ‘the Son of God,’ have been accidental.

There was, however, a more special motive for this fiction of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the discussion of which must be postponed till the subject of the Resurrection of the Messiah himself comes to be considered, which it will be in a subsequent Chapter*.

The minds of pious believers will naturally receive a severe shock from such a charge as this being brought against the favourite writer of the Christian Church. They will doubtless exclaim that such fabrications are not only incredible but impossible, without considering that, in saying this, they are merely using the very argument of the objectors to miracles, which they themselves with good reason condemn:—‘We never knew such a thing to occur, and therefore we will not believe it possible that it ever could or ever did occur.’ It may be sufficient to ask those who so argue, Which of the two is more incredible, that a dead man should have been resuscitated, or that a living man should have told a falsehood?

It shall be shown that such actions are not only of common occurrence, but are matters of notoriety in the very country which gave birth to the ‘Gospel according to St. John.’ But first shall be adduced the testimony of a contemporary of eminence as to the general character of the natives of that country.

Cicero, in his Defence of Lucius Valerius Flaccus, thus addresses his Asiatic Greek accusers:—‘Wherefore I beseech you, O ye Asiatic witnesses, that when you wish to recollect with accuracy what amount of authority you bring into a court of justice, you would yourselves describe Asia, and remember not what foreigners are accustomed to say of you, but what you yourselves affirm of your own races. For, as I think, the Asia that you talk of consists of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia. Is it then a proverb

* See Chapter XX.

of ours [meaning the Romans] or of yours, that a Phrygian is usually made better by beating? What more? Is not this a common saying of you all with respect to the whole of Caria, if you wish to make any experiment accompanied with danger, that you had better try it on a Carian? Moreover, what saying is there in Greek conversation more ordinary and well known than, when any one is spoken of contemptuously, to say that he is the very lowest of the Mysians? For why should I speak of Lydia? What Greek ever wrote a comedy in which the principal slave was not a Lydian? What injury, then, is done to you, if we decide that we are to adhere to the judgment which you have formed of yourselves? In truth, I think that I have said enough and more than enough of the whole race of witnesses from Asia' *.

These are the people among whom the pure faith in the Messiah was planted and soon took deep root. Is it then surprising that, as that faith unavoidably became corrupted by its contact with heathenism, a people such as these should have been ready with any falsehoods or frauds, however gross, to support the view that they themselves took of the Christian Dispensation, and should have endeavoured, as it were, to stamp out every vestige of the pure faith? Is it not rather a wonder that any vestige whatever of that pure faith should have sustained the ordeal to which it was subjected during the first ages of the Christian Church, and that, Pagan and Polytheistic as this Church became, it should still have retained the knowledge of the truth that there is 'One God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus the Messiah' †?

It is so essential that the point here contended for should be brought home to the minds of non-reasoners by concrete examples, rather than by abstract arguments, that the following anecdote shall be given, in a condensed form, from Dr. Finlay's 'History of Greece under the Othmans and Venetians.' In the Greek 'History of the Patriarchs' it is recorded as a fact that in the year 1537, in the time of Jeremiah, Patriarch of Constantinople,

* 'The Works of Cicero,' tr. Yonge, i. 453. † 1 Tim. ii. 5.

Sultan Suleiman the Lawgiver, better known to Europeans as the Magnificent, was reminded that it was his duty as the Khalif of Islam to destroy all places of worship possessed by infidels in every town taken by storm ; and as Constantinople had been so conquered by Mohammed the Second, Sultan Suleiman issued a decree, ordering all the Greek churches in the capital to be converted into mosques or else closed. On hearing this dreadful news, the Patriarch went to the Grand Vizier, Tülfî Pasha, and induced him, by means of a large present, to concert with him a scheme for evading the Sultan's decree. The connivance of the other members of the divan was also secured by bribery. Thus fortified, the Patriarch appeared before the Council, and boldly asserted that the decree did not apply to Constantinople, because this city was not taken by storm, but was surrendered by the Emperor Constantine Palæologus under a capitulation with the conqueror. At this the members of the divan manifested the greatest surprise ; and on account of the importance of the matter it was referred to a full meeting of the Council. On the day appointed crowds of the inhabitants of the city, of all religions, assembled to witness the proceedings, and learn the result. After considerable delay, the Patriarch was admitted into the Council-chamber, where he was informed by the Grand Vizier in a formal address, the very words of which are recorded, that the Christian priests were to leave their churches and deliver up the keys of them. On this the Patriarch, as the Head of the Orthodox Church and Christ's Vicar upon Earth, solemnly repeated his previous statement, and affirmed that he was prepared to prove its truth by the evidence of two Moslems, as required by the Mohammedan law. Accordingly he produced two Turks, natives of Adrianople, each upwards of one hundred years old, whose venerable appearance is minutely described in this veracious record, the 'History of the Patriarchs,' and who affirmed, on their faith as Moslems, that they were present at the siege and conquest of Constantinople, eighty-four years previously, at which time they were eighteen years old ; and they related the particulars of the capture of the city, in a form slightly different

from that of Gibbon and other historians, but giving minute details of the capitulation and of the charter of free pardon granted by the Sultan to the Greek Emperor and the people of Constantinople, the precise terms of which charter they recited, with many more circumstantial details. On such evidence as this the Divan could only draw up a report, stating the facts; whereupon Sultan Suleiman ordered that the Christians of Constantinople should retain quiet possession of their churches for evermore.

The reader will naturally be desirous of learning how much is true and how much is false of this minutely circumstantial narrative; and as to all appearances it must have come from an eye-witness, he will naturally conclude that, however much exaggerated and perhaps distorted, it is based on a solid substratum of fact. He will readily imagine the two aged Turks from Adrianople to have been suborned perjurers, primed for the occasion by the crafty Patriarch and the not less astute Tülfî Pasha, with the connivance of the other venal members of the Divan, so as to deceive the Sultan and the Ulemas, which latter must, however, under the most favourable view of the case, have been very ignorant and stupid persons to be so easily deceived. What then will be the reader's amazement when he learns that the whole story is untrue from beginning to end,—that it is a perfect myth, nothing of the kind having ever occurred! The names of Sultan Suleiman and Patriarch Jeremiah are those of historical personages, and that is all. There was no such person as Tülfî Pasha, Grand Vizier in A.D. 1537, or at any other period. But Lüfti Pasha, the learned historian of the Ottoman Empire, was Grand Vizier between the years 1539 and 1541; and it is manifest that the Christian Ecclesiastical historian, in his excessive ignorance, misspelled that official's name, and, with national self-conceit proportioned to his ignorance, pictured the able Grand Vizier as a corrupt tool in the Patriarch's hands, and the intelligent Turkish sovereign as a barbarian easily to be imposed on by Greek finesse; whilst the Ulemas and the whole court are made by him to have been totally unconscious of the circum-

stances under which Constantinople had fallen less than a century previously.

The only tittle of fact on which this fable may be made to hang is a threat of Sultan Suleiman, which however was not acted on, that he would destroy all the Christian churches in his dominions, by way of reprisals for the ravages committed by the Spanish garrison of Coron in the year 1533. But the most singular and most instructive part of the tale is, the candid simplicity with which the falsehood and frauds attributed to the Patriarch are held up by the Greek historian to the admiration of pious Christians, as if nothing that was done ‘for the good of Holy Church’ could possibly be otherwise than praiseworthy. The heathen-Christian writer of the fourth Gospel doubtless imagined he was performing an equally meritorious act in composing such a mass of fiction.

A still more striking example than that of the modern Greek historian shall be given from Dean Stanley’s ‘Lectures on the Eastern Church,’ where he relates the manner in which the final subscription of all the Bishops, members of the Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325, to the Creed and twenty Canons then decreed, is said to have been obtained.

Two of the 318 Bishops, Chrysanthus and Mysonius, who had entirely concurred in the views of the Council, died before the close of its session, and were buried in the cemetery of Nicæa. When the day for the final subscription arrived, the other members of the Council took the volume, in which the Creed and Canons were written, to the grave of the two deceased Bishops, and addressing them as Moslems still address their dead saints, solemnly conjured them, that if then, in the brightness of the Divine Presence, they still approved, they should come and sign with their brethren the decrees of the Faith. They then sealed the volume, which they all had already signed, leaving blank spaces for the required signatures, and laid it on the tomb, watching in prayer all night; and in the morning, on breaking the seal, they found the following declaration signed by the two dead men:—‘We, Chrysanthus and Mysonius, fully concurring with the first Holy

and Ecumenical Synod, although removed from earth, have signed the volume with our own hands.'

It is not easy to determine whose testimony is the more entitled to credence—the two dead Bishops who came from the Divine Presence to affix their signatures to the Nicene Creed and Canons, or the pretended 'disciple whom Jesus loved,' who, in the face of the concurrent declaration of the three other Evangelists that, at the Crucifixion of their Lord, everybody stood afar off, solemnly affirms that he stood at the foot of the Cross, heard the last words of Jesus, and received from him the charge of his mother, of whom, however, not another word is heard till the announcement of her 'Assumption' as the 'Mother of God'! And this is he who dares to say that 'he that saw bare record, and his record is true ; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe' *. And the whole of Christendom has taken him at his word, and has believed !

Before quitting this deplorable part of the subject, it may be well to show the further development of the story of the miraculous signature—miraculous in the vulgarest sense—of the Creed and Canons of the Council of Nicaea. The same writer last cited relates that, according to a legend of the Alexandrian Church, when the Bishops assembled in the Council took their places on their thrones, they were 318 in number, but as often as they rose from their seats to be called over, it appeared that they were 319 ; so that they never could make the number come right, and whenever they approached the last of the series, he immediately changed into the likeness of his next neighbour.

Dean Stanley remarks that this truly Oriental legend expresses in a daring figure what was undoubtedly the belief of the next generation of the Church, that the Holy Spirit had been present in the Council to guide their deliberations aright. Only there was nothing at all uncommon in this 'daring.' Such marvellous stories, like that told by the real moving spirit of the Council, Eusebius of Cæsarea, that he with his own hand translated and copied the correspondence between Jesus Christ and King Abgar

* John xix. 35.

of Edessa, as preserved in the Imperial archives, only show but too plainly how the ignorance and credulity of the Greek converts to Christianity enabled the clergy to palm off on them the most palpable fictions ; and, what is far worse, alas ! it demonstrates even more plainly how ready the clergy were to trump up any story, or practice any deception, for the greater glory of God, as they would pretend in their exoteric teaching, but in reality ‘for the good of Holy Church,’ which means the greater glory and profit of the establishment to which they belonged, as well as their own individual glorification and emolument in connexion therewith. It is much to be feared that the maxim of the priesthood of all ages, of all countries, and of all faiths, is—‘*Populus vult decipi : decipiatur.*’

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

It is an opinion entertained both by those who possess an excess and those who have a deficiency of faith, that the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament. The former was a wrathful, jealous God, a blood-thirsty, insatiate tyrant, punishing strictly, and more than strictly, the offences of his sinful creatures ; whereas He of the New Testament is a God of mercy and forgiveness, of goodness and of love.

Under this view Christianity, though originating in the midst of Judaism, and being the complement of it, would be not merely a new Dispensation but a new Religion. The error is fundamental. The One and Only true God is and always must be the same : His attributes, like Himself, must be unchangeable. And so they are found to be, if the Scriptures be but properly considered.

In the second commandment of the Decalogue, the Almighty, after declaring, ‘I, the Eternal, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,’ adds, ‘And yet* showing mercy unto thousands [i. e. of generations] of them that love me and keep my commandments’†. And when afterwards he proclaims His sacred name of Jehovah—the ‘Shem hammephorash’—His words are, ‘The Eternal, the Eternal God (is) merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth ; keeping mercy for thousands (of generations), forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ; and yet‡ that will by no means clear (the guilty), visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth (generation)’§.

It is because of the unchangeable nature of the Eternal—‘I am that I am’||—who never can be other than what He is and always has been, that the rebellious Israelitish nation were not abandoned on account of the repeated acts of iniquity, transgression, and sin of which they have been guilty. Over and over again did they provoke Him to destroy them ; but, because the Eternal changeth not, they have not been utterly annihilated. Remembering His Promise to their forefathers Abraham and Jacob, confirmed by the Law delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, He continues to show mercy unto thousands of generations of them that loved Him and kept His commandments ; and, in the words of the last of the prophets of the Old Covenant, whilst saying, ‘I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that

* The original Hebrew has here the adversative וְ, which, as the two parts of the sentence are antithetical, ought to be translated δε, ‘and yet’ or ‘but,’ instead of καὶ, ‘and,’ as it stands in all the translations. This subject has already been discussed in Chapter XII. pages 151, 152.

† Exod. xi. 5, 6.

‡ Here too the וְ is adversative.

§ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

|| Exod. iii. 14.

turn aside the stranger,' He graciously adds, 'And yet* fear not Me, saith the Eternal (God) of Hosts. For I am the Eternal, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed'†.

The Jews, instead of having, after the example of all other conquered races and shattered and dispersed nationalities, become absorbed into the dominant populations among whom they have so long dwelt, have remained to this day a distinct people in the midst of the various nations in all parts of the globe; thus standing forth as witnesses before the rest of mankind to the immutability of the Most High, and as pledges that, under His all-wise and all-merciful Providence, they are destined yet to serve as instruments in His hands for the accomplishment of His own inscrutable purposes.

The God, Whose pure and infinite nature it is impossible for mortal and sinful man to comprehend, is the God by Whom the Promise was made to Abraham, by Whom the Law was delivered to Moses, and of Whose Kingdom on Earth Jesus, the Son of David, is the Messiah or Anointed King. To all reasoning minds it ought to be inconceivable that this Messiah would teach any religious belief, or system of morality, other than what had been revealed to Abraham and to Moses. And, in fact, our Lord emphatically declared, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled'. And when, towards the close of his mortal career, he was asked by a Jewish scribe at Jerusalem which was the first commandment of all, he answered, 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is this: Thou shalt

* Here again is the adversative *;*, respecting which see the note in the preceding page.

† Mal. iii. 5, 6.

‡ Matth. v. 17, 18.

love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these' *.

Where is there at the present day a Jew who would not repeat the words with which the Jewish scribe answered Jesus more than eighteen centuries ago?—‘ Well, Rabbi, thou hast said the truth. For there is one God, and there is none other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices’ †. And the Jews of the present day, collectively and individually, should ponder well what followed this declaration of their pious, learned, and liberal-minded co-religionist:—‘ And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God’ ‡.

On the other hand, where is there a pious and enlightened Christian, conscientiously putting into practice those doctrines which he is now being told to regard as nothing more than a *new* system of pure morality, originated by ‘Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee’ from that indiscriminate benevolence which was the innate principle of his own nature, and constructed by him out of the depth of his own moral consciousness without need of Divine assistance,—where is there a Christian, whose moral conduct, whether in his domestic or in his social relations, will be superior to that of an equally pious and enlightened Jew, whose sole guides are the Law and the Prophets, and who rejects the Gospel, not for the want of correspondence between it and the Scriptures of the Old Testament,—for when properly understood their doctrines are identical,—but because of the veil that is upon the heart of himself and his people; though when they shall turn unto the Lord the veil shall be taken away §?

As regards the literal construction of the passage in the second Gospel which led to the foregoing remarks, it has to be specially observed that the words attributed to Jesus in the Authorized English Version are, ‘ Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one

* Mark xii. 29-31.

† Ibid. 32, 33.

‡ Ibid. 34.

§ 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16.

Lord!'* But it is certain that these were not the precise words uttered by our Lord. As a Jew speaking to one of his own nation and creed, he would have repeated the national confession of faith used down to the present day,—‘Shema’ Israel ! Adonai Elohenu, Adonai ehad ;’ such being the words of the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy vi. 4, with the substitution only of ‘Adonai’—‘the Lord’—for the sacred tetragrammaton,—יהוָה, ‘Jehovah.’ And the correct translation of this text is, as it is given above, ‘The Lord is our God, the Lord alone,’ and not as we find it in all modern versions, which simply follow the faulty translation of the Septuagint Greek, *Kυριος ὁ Θεος ἡμων, Kυριος εις ἐστι.*

The incorrectness of this translation will be patent, if only the name ‘Jehovah’ be used in the English version instead of its substitute ‘The Lord,’ when the passage will read, ‘Jehovah our God is one Jehovah ;’ as if it were possible for the idea to enter into the mind of man that there are two ‘Jehovahs.’ In fact, the evident intention of this confession of faith is not to assert the unity of the Deity in the sense of singleness either of nature or of person, but to affirm His singularity, soleness, exclusiveness as the One only true God, in accordance with the first Commandment, ‘Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me ;’ and this idea must be expressed in other languages not by ‘one,’—though this is not denied to be the primary meaning of the Hebrew יְהוָה,—but by ‘alone.’ Consequently the correct rendering of the text is, as it is given above, ‘Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone,’ or, replacing the Shem hammephōresh by ‘Adonai,’ ‘The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.’ That this is the sense in which the affirmation was made by Jesus and understood by his questioner, the Jewish scribe, is evident from the response of the latter : ‘Well, Rabbi, thou hast said the truth ; for there is but one God, and there is none but He ;’ that is to say, ‘He *alone* is God.’

It can hardly be imagined that the Greek Jews of Alexandria

* Mark xii. 29.

were so unacquainted with the genius of the Hebrew language as to commit this error unintentionally. The direct contrary might, indeed, be contended, from their correct rendering of the text of Isaiah li. 2, ‘Look unto Abraham your father for I called him *alone*’ (כִּי אָחָד קָרָא תְּזַבֵּחַ). And hence it may be reasonably conjectured that the translators had a motive for what they did, this motive being the desire not to profane the sacred confession of faith of their nation by representing it correctly in any Gentile tongue. It was under a like feeling of reverence that the Jewish historian, Josephus, refrained from repeating in Greek the precise words of the Decalogue*, and that at the present day the learned Julius Fürst, in his exhaustive ‘Concordance of the Hebrew Language,’ has left the sacred name יְהֹוָה unexplained!

It is apparently from a similar feeling that in the Latin Vulgate and in all modern versions of the New Testament, the sign or name of the ship which carried St. Paul from Melita to Puteoli, on his way from the capital of the Jewish to that of the Gentile world, has been wrongly translated. In the Greek original that sign or name is the Διοσκούραι, or ‘Sons of God’; for which significant and almost ominous title that of ‘Castor and Pollux’—in the Vulgate ‘cui erat signum Castorum’—has been substituted in all the versions, Luther’s German translation alone excepted, which has ‘die Zwillinge,’ that is, ‘Gemini,’ or ‘the Twins,’ a rendering which, however, is just as insufficient as the other.

In the ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ or newly published edition of the Bible, it is said, in a note on the words of the Hebrew text, ‘Their expression is in the original singularly terse and forcible, “Jehovah our Elohim, Jehovah One.” Their very brevity opens them to various constructions, *e. g.* “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone”; “The Lord our God, namely the Lord, is One”; “The Lord, the Lord only, is our God.” The rendering of the Authorized Version is on all grounds the best.’ The incorrectness of this opinion shall be established by a crucial test.

* ‘Antiq. iii. 5. 4.

Let it be supposed that some loyal British Jews desired to declare in a similar form in the Hebrew language that Queen Victoria is the only sovereign of this country. They would have to say ‘Victoria our Sovereign, Victoria one’; which, according to the writer of the ‘Commentary,’ might be construed either ‘Victoria is our Sovereign, Victoria alone’; ‘Victoria our Sovereign, namely Victoria, is one’; ‘Victoria, Victoria only, is our Sovereign.’ But it would surely not be added that the rendering, on the model of the Authorized Version, ‘Victoria our Sovereign is one Victoria,’ is on all grounds the best!

Among the modern Jews the authorized rendering of this text of Scripture is ‘The Eternal our God, the Eternal is One,’ which is objectionable, though not in the same degree as that of the Septuagint and the English Authorized Version. There ought to be no question that the copula ‘is’ should be inserted in the former instead of the latter portion of the sentence, ‘The Eternal (is) our God, the Eternal One’; that is to say ‘the Eternal alone,’ the word ‘one’ being rendered here as it is in Isaiah li. 2.

An apposite example of the employment in the Latin language of ‘unus’ in the sense of ‘alone,’ as it is here contended the Hebrew ‘one,’ should be translated, has recently presented itself. In the summer of last year (1871) a medallion was placed immediately over the bronze statue of St. Peter,—formerly Jupiter Capitolinus,—that, in the Church of the Vatican at Rome,

‘Like a tall bully lifts its head and lies,’

the dedication of which is—

‘Pio IX. Pontifici Max.
Qui Petri annos
In Pontificatu Romano
Unus aequavit.’

That is to say, who ‘alone’ equalled what never existed!

- It may seem presumptuous thus to propose to correct the national rendering of this important text, which has received the sanction of ages; inasmuch as the doing so implies a better acquaintance with the grammatical construction of the Hebrew

language than that possessed by Jewish scholars generally. But when we consider the narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness of the Jews during so many centuries, their obstinate rejection of all communion with Gentiles and with Gentile learning, and their fixed determination to be bound by the ‘traditions’ of their elders,—which in truth means never, and under no circumstances, to correct the errors of former ages,—their ignorance even of their own language ceases to be surprising.

How intense the national hatred was of everything ‘profane’ is exemplified by the statement in the Targum (*Treat. ‘Megillah’*), that when Ptolemy Philadelphus caused the Septuagint Greek version of the Pentateuch to be undertaken, ‘it was a day as fatal to Israel as that on which the golden calf was made.’ And from the same register of Jewish ignorance and Jewish wisdom, Mr. E. Deutsch has extracted a ‘weird story’ of Elisha ben Abuyah, the Faust of the Talmud, who, while sitting in the Academy at the feet of his teachers to study the law, kept the ‘profane books’—of ‘Homeros’ to wit—hidden in his garment, and from whose mouth ‘Greek songs’ never ceased to flow. ‘How he, notwithstanding his early scepticism, rapidly rises to eminence in that same law, finally falls away, and becomes a traitor and an outcast, and his very name a thing of unutterable horror; how, one day—it was the great day of Atonement—he passes the ruins of the temple, and hears a voice within murmuring like a dove,—“all men shall be forgiven this day save Elisha ben Abuyah, who, knowing me, has betrayed me”’*.

Is it, then, surprising that the result should be a mental torpor and impotence such as is thus graphically described by Dr. Arnold in a letter to Archbishop Whately?—‘I had occasion in the winter to observe this in a Jew, of whom I took a few lessons in Hebrew, and who was learned in the writings of the Rabbis, but totally ignorant of all the literature of the West, ancient and modern. He was consequently just like a child,—his mind being entirely without the habit of criticism or analysis, whether as applied to words or to things; wholly ignorant, for

* ‘Quarterly Review’ (1867), cxxiii. 428.

instance, of the analysis of language, whether grammatical or logical ; or of the analysis of a narrative of facts, according to the rules of probability, external or internal. I never so felt the debt which the human race owes to Pythagoras, or whoever it was that was the first founder of Greek philosophy *. Happily for the Jews of the present day, this reproach is being rolled away from them. They are no longer in dread of Gentile literature and learning, and they are reaping the reward of their toleration and liberality.

Returning from this digression, it has to be remarked that, from what took place between our Lord Jesus and his pious and learned countryman, it is certain that the Messiah came not to do away with the Law, but to proclaim its inviolability and permanence ; only, as the Law, which had been given because of transgressions, had become stifled and hidden by the rites and ceremonies that in the course of ages had been incorporated with it, Jesus came to do away with these, and at the same time to spiritualize the letter of the Law itself. But in this he did nothing more than what his ancestor David and all the prophets had done before him. And even the Scribe in the Gospel well knew the difference between the spirit and the letter ; for he declared that ‘to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices ;’ and if more than these, which formed the chief service of the Temple, then more than all the rest of the ceremonial Law put together.

The practical performance of man’s duty to God and to his neighbour is the entire religious and moral system taught by the Messiah, and inculcated by his own example. Of it the first portion is man’s duty towards his God, whom he is to love with all his heart and with all his might, and with all his soul, and with all his strength ; and this, apart from its practical manifestation in the performance of his duty to his neighbour,—in doing his duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call

* Stanley’s ‘Life of Arnold,’ i. 418.

him,—he can only perform by keeping himself in constant spiritual communion with his Creator and Preserver, through the medium of prayer and praise.

Praise and thanksgiving are the natural means of giving vent to the intense feeling of gratitude which Man ought to entertain towards his God, for all His goodness, mercy, and loving-kindness, in the blessings so bountifully bestowed on him. By some persons, this thanksgiving is said to be unmeaning and valueless. But we readily thank our fellow-men for favours done to us. Is God, then, the only benefactor whom we should treat differently? Our instinct teaches us the contrary, as has been so happily demonstrated in our National Thanksgiving of 1872.

The nation to which Jesus belonged was, and still is, essentially a prayerful people. Though constantly backsliding like their model king, David, they were still the people, like as he was the man, ‘after God’s own heart;’ and their Psalter, which the Christian Church has received and adopted as a most precious heritage from the Old Covenant, may be said to contain the only true prayers as well as thanksgivings, with the exception of that comprehensive and universal form, generally known as ‘the Lord’s Prayer,’ which Jesus himself dictated to his disciples. And even this prayer, though given by our Lord, was not anything absolutely new, but appears to have been adopted by him from expressions already existing in the Jewish liturgy, and spiritualized and sanctioned by him as a summary of all that Man has absolute need to say when holding intercourse with his Maker. The formula of address to the Almighty recommended in the Talmud for the hours of distress or peril is, ‘Thy will be done in heaven; grant peace to those that fear Thee on earth. And whatsoever pleaseth Thee, do. Hallowed be Thou, O Lord, who hearest prayer.’ And the commencement of the usual Jewish blessing or ‘grace’ recited on most occasions is, ‘Hallowed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,’ which, it will be seen, is very similar to the commencement of the Lord’s Prayer; the only remarkable change being—and it applies to all the sayings of the Messiah—that he speaks of the Almighty neither by his revealed name ‘Jehovah,’ nor by his substituted

title ‘the Lord’ (‘Adonai’),—which latter, having been adopted in the Septuagint and other versions, has led to such deplorable misunderstandings,—but gives to Him the more gracious and endearing appellation of ‘Our Father.’

Prayer occupies even a higher place in the Christian liturgy than it did in that of the Old Testament worship; but this has arisen from the abolition of the sacrifices and service of the Temple, which the Messiah came to do away with in spirit, in anticipation of the time when they should be put an end to altogether. Under the Christian Dispensation the only ‘sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart’*, like him who wrote, ‘I am weary with my groaning: all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears’†.

In the words (slightly modified) of one of the shining lights of Christendom, the illustrious Dr. Döllinger, it may be said that we are bidden to pray without ceasing, under all circumstances, without growing weary. ‘Prayer is for spiritual, what breath is to bodily life. The constant endeavour and desire of man’s heart for eternal righteousness, the fixing of intellect and will on God, the raising of the spirit out of the narrow boundaries of the present world into fellowship with that Being to Whom all evil is an abomination, Whose law of holiness is immutable, and Who wills only our perfection,—that is the prayer without ceasing which the Messiah and the Apostles commanded and practiced. For believers prayer means,—listening above all for God’s voice within them, remembering His words and shaping their thoughts accordingly, questioning and looking at themselves in the light streaming from Him, and letting it shine into all the dark corners of their hearts; and, while gazing on their own sins and imperfections, entreating pardon and strength to purify themselves continually more and more. All that philosophy in its noblest form promised to the Greeks,—repose of mind, regulation of the affections, stilling of the excited passions, moral purification,—Christians gain from prayer. Their practice is the true school of philosophy, when they cry to God, pray, give thanks

* Ps. li. 17.

† Ps. vi. 6.

with child-like self-surrender, confidence, and perseverance, renewing constantly this interrupted communion with Him, resting from earthly cares and toils, and feeding their faith and love on the meditation of the sublimest truths' *.

Most conscious is the believer of the efficacy of sincere, earnest, repeated, constant prayer—not the mere moving of the lips, not the recital of lengthened litanies, creeds, or confessions of faith, composed by ignorant and presumptuous men, nor even the mere verbal repetition of the Lord's Prayer ('Paternoster'), or other formula, as if some magical power were inherent in the words themselves; but the utterance of the feelings of the heart,—like the cry of the contrite tax-gatherer ('publican') in the parable, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!'—the inward struggling of the spirit, in the hope, the endeavour, the determination that it shall be listened to, so finely exemplified in the two parables of the importunate neighbour † and the unjust judge ‡. No one will think of denying the efficacy, in many cases, of the persistent supplication made by a needy and sorrowful man to his fellow man. Are we, then, to believe the Creator to be less merciful, more obdurate, than His creatures? The eloquent Bishop of Orleans, Msgr. Dupanloup, has said that 'Prayer equals, and even sometimes surpasses, the power of God: it triumphs over His will, His power, and even His justice;' and though this paradox affords a striking instance of how concrete illustrations of abstract principles may sometimes be liable to misconception, if construed too literally, and especially if pushed to an extreme, still even in this hyperbole there exists a depth of truth.

But while the believer in this spiritual communion with his Maker and Preserver feels and knows what prayer really is, the heathen of olden times, who had it not in his heart, was ignorant of its real nature. He cried and made offerings to his gods for help and earthly blessings, but he did not pray; and the philosopher who deemed that all things are subject to the fixed laws of an eternal and inflexible course of Nature, could expect no

* 'The First Age of Christianity and the Church,' ii. 181.

† Luke xi. 5-8.

‡ Luke xviii. 1-5.

answer to petitions addressed to powerless deities, who themselves were under the same constraint of Nature. Does the materialistic philosopher of the present day possess a surer or more consolatory hope than he of former ages?

From the spiritual nature of the relation between Man and his Maker, the love of God, in itself, must necessarily be internal; that is to say, whatever may be the outward forms it assumes as regards the individual man, it is still only personal, and may, in a certain sense, be said to be selfish. The formalist, or ascetic, though he may profess the contrary, is essentially worldly-minded. Fastings, mortifications of the body and even of the spirit, are far from being signs of humiliation, and too often are nothing more than the tokens of spiritual pride. The Pharisee in the Temple could say, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess!'^{*}

Our Lord has declared, on the contrary, that 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven'.[†] And that will is most plainly manifested in His command contained in the nineteenth chapter of the third book of the Pentateuch:—'Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I, the Eternal (say it). Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and (yet) not suffer sin on account of him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I, the Eternal (say it)').[‡]

It was the conclusion of this portion of the Law that our Lord, in his conversation with the Scribe at Jerusalem, repeated as

* Luke xviii. 11, 12.

† Matth. vii. 21.

‡ Levit. xix. 15-18.

being the second of the great commandments, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,—the love of God being the first,—adding, ‘There is none other commandment greater than these’*. What, then, are we to say of the statement in the fourth Gospel, that our Lord Jesus, when addressing his disciples for the last time before his death, gave them ‘A new Commandment’†? And what are we to say of the pretended ‘new’ Commandment itself? This subject is deserving of serious consideration, especially as this ‘new’ Commandment has been recently held up by an eloquent divine ‡ as an addition to the Decalogue,—an ‘eleventh Commandment’! The statement in that document is that Jesus, who had expressed himself so entirely in the spirit, and indeed in the very words, of the Law to his learned co-religionist, the Scribe at Jerusalem, as to elicit from him the complimentary declaration, ‘Well, Rabbi, thou hast said the truth,—this same Jesus should nevertheless have addressed his disciples in these terms:—‘A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another’§.

Now as these words are alleged to have been uttered immediately after Jesus had spoken disparagingly of ‘the Jews,’ as if they were a different people,—though he and all his disciples were Jews themselves,—it is evident that the ‘love’ of this ‘new Commandment’ was not intended to be extended to the ‘neighbour’ of the Law and the true Gospel, but was to be limited to his disciples themselves, or at most to those who followed them: they were to ‘love *one another*’ and ‘by this all [other] men were to know that they were his disciples’!

How totally this ‘new Commandment’ of the pseudo-Jesus of the fourth Gospel is at variance with the real teaching of the true Messiah of the historical Gospels, is shown by his exposition of the spiritual meaning of the ‘second great Commandment:’ ‘Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies,

* See above, pages 191, 192.

† John xiii. 34.

‡ Dean Stanley.

§ John xiii. 34, 35.

bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the tax-gatherers the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? Do not even the tax-gatherers so ? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' *.

In a certain sense this exposition might really be called a 'new' Commandment ; but our Lord did not intend it as such, his object being to show that all men, good or bad, friends or enemies, 'Jews' or Gentiles, were to be included in the original command to 'love one's neighbour as one's self' ; precisely as he explained the term 'neighbour' in the parable of the man who fell among thieves †, by means of which he compelled 'a certain lawyer' who 'stood up and tempted him,' to confess that the Samaritan,—one of a people held in hatred and detestation by the Jews,—who 'showed mercy' on the poor wounded Jew, was that Jew's 'neighbour,' rather than the priest and Levite of his own people, who 'had passed by on the other side.'

It was in the spirit of his Master that another most learned lawyer, who had been brought up at the feet of the grandson of the orthodox Rabbi Hillel, in like manner expounded the command to 'love one's neighbour as one's self,' given by the Father of Mercies, whose unbounded love for His creatures requires them to imitate Him as far as their feeble powers permit them to do so :—'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *ἀγάπη* (love),—not the passion, but the affection, brotherly love, goodwill, kindness, which is usually translated 'charity,' though, from the special application this term has received, it has come to convey the limited, and therefore incorrect, meaning of alms-giving, or outward acts of beneficence, instead of the inward feeling of disinterested benevolence, which such 'charitable' acts

* Matth. v. 43-48.

† Luke x. 30-37.

are far from testifying at all times,—if then, says the Apostle, I ‘have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind, love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love’*.

Under the operation of our Lord’s interpretation of the *old* Commandment of the Law that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, as thus further illustrated by his great Apostle,—so different from the pretended ‘new,’ or ‘eleventh’ Commandment of the fourth Gospel,—all men, without any exception, are to be regarded and treated as brethren, as the sons of our heavenly Father. But this equality before God and man had been done away with by the formalists and traditionists, the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses’s seat, and who, hard as were the ordinances of the Law itself to a stiff-necked generation like the Israelites, had rendered them infinitely more heavy by their glosses and additions. Though they were all descendants of Israel, and had been taught to look on one another as members of one family, they had virtually become separated into classes or castes, of whom the higher would not condescend to eat with those below them, to sit together with them in the synagogue, or even to worship God together in the Temple; who ‘loved the uppermost places at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi’†.

When Jesus, a man of good social position and well educated,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1-13.

† Matth. xxiii. 6, 7.

sat down to dinner with unwashed hands in the company of tax-gatherers and other violaters of the ceremonial law,—‘sinners’ in the estimation of the ritualists, and persons altogether beneath him according to the conventional notions of society,—he was reproved by these ‘hypocrites,’ whose sentiments were on a par with those of the haughty Duchess of Buckingham, who, when invited by the pious Countess of Huntingdon to attend one of Whitefield’s sermons,—to take part in the worship of the Almighty among the congregation of ‘sinners’ of whom he was the honoured minister,—replied, ‘I thank your Ladyship for the information concerning Methodist preachers: their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and to do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches who crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.’

As a contrast to these words of this ‘Christian’ Pharisee may be cited those of him whom that proud and insolent woman professed to serve, and in whose presence she condescended to confess that she was a ‘miserable sinner,’ provided only that she was in company with other similar ‘sinners’ of ‘high rank and good breeding’:—‘Two men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax-gatherer (‘publican’). The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax-gatherer, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner’*. And the lesson taught by our Lord from this parable was, ‘I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’

* Luke xviii. 10-13.

The lesson of humility, and of perfect equality of all before God and man, thus taught by the Messiah, is repeated in various forms throughout the Gospel histories. Can it be wondered at that such doctrines should have gone home to the hearts of the poor and needy, to the afflicted in mind, body, or estate? Never before had they seen it on this fashion. This doctrine of universal brotherhood, that God is no respecter of persons, that all men of all nations are absolutely equal before Him, and consequently before their fellow-men—that ‘there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but the Messiah is all and in all’*,—had a fascination for those who heard it; and when preached by Jesus himself,—whom (as is shown in a former Chapter †) we may believe to have spoken as Isaiah, John the Baptist, Chrysostom, Luther, Bossuet, Whitefield, and all the most eloquent preachers never spoke,—the effect must have been miraculous—irresistible. They not only felt that they were freed from the bonds of sin, but likewise from human thralldom, which, though it might retain the body in slavery,—as with those whom Paul commanded to be obedient to their masters in the flesh‡,—did not, could not, enslave the soul. Henceforth there was to be no distinction of rank among the believers in the Messiah: they were all ‘brethren,’ ‘saints,’ ‘disciples,’ the ‘elect,’ ‘children of God,’ joint members of the Kingdom of Heaven; and they received the assurance that ‘whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free’§, their masters being at the same time admonished that with God, the only true Master, in heaven, all are equal, and that with him there is no respect of persons||.

When, in the course of time, the extension of Christianity caused its general reception throughout the Roman Empire and its adoption as the religion of the State, the ‘Church’ of the Messiah soon became like that which he had come to purify and

* Col. iii. 11; and see 1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 28.

† Chapter XII. page 141. ‡ Eph. vi. 5; and see 1 Tim. vi. 1.

§ Eph. vi. 8. || Ibid. 9.

reform. It had its Scribes and Pharisees, its ‘publicans’ and sinners, its ecclesiastics pretending to be the sole depositaries and interpreters of the Sacred oracles, nobles to whom it appeared monstrous to be told that ‘they had hearts as sinful as the common wretches who crawl on the earth,’ and masses of the ignorant and poor, whom the two superior classes between them kept in a state of spiritual and temporal bondage, the thraldom of the mind being more absolute and complete than that of the body. The cry of the oppressed went up to the Throne of God, and an avenger came in the person of the Arabian Mohammed, who, as it were at the sounding of the trumpets by the six angels after the opening of the Second Seal in the Apocalypse, swept off one third of the Christian Church, and seemed to threaten to usurp the place of the Messiah himself*. He, too, preached the spiritual equality of mankind and brotherly love, the doctrine of the Law of Moses, as interpreted by Jesus, the absolute equality of all before God and before man ; and this was the cause of the rapid spread of Mohammedanism, as it had been of Christianity six centuries previously.

But whilst adopting the precepts of Jesus, Mohammed did not follow his blessed example. Our Lord preached peace and goodwill to all men, and expressly forbade his disciples to use force. ‘Put up again thy sword into his place,’ said he to one of them ; ‘for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword’†. Mohammed, on the contrary, promulgated Islam by the sword. And what has been the result ? At the present day, the Christians of all denominations, in all parts of the world, are estimated at three hundred millions, or perhaps more : the Mohammedans are only about half that number. And whilst the former faith, full of life and vigour, is daily adding to its numbers, the latter is almost stationary.

Nevertheless it is a great mistake to imagine, as some do, that Mohammedanism is effete. So far from this being the case, there is an inherent vitality in its sublime profession of faith, ‘La Illah illa Allah’—‘There is no God but God’; and though in reality

* Rev. viii. ix.

† Matth. xxvi. 52.

this is nothing but the divine truth revealed to Abraham, delivered to Moses, and inculcated by Jesus, as the Arabian law-giver and conqueror himself admitted, still its professors in this form may be excused for adding to it, ‘And Mohammed is the Apostle of God’; for truly he must be looked on in the light of an Apostle, who preached and established this faith among his idolatrous countrymen, among their heathen and polytheistic neighbours, and among the worse than idolatrous polytheists profaning the name of the Messiah (‘Christ’), who occupied the countries where Mohammedanism has now its chief abode.

It is the comparative purity of this faith that enables it to maintain itself against dogmatic Christianity, and even to make converts where Christian missionaries have not met with the like success. Still the contest between the two religions has for some time past been an unequal one, and it may henceforth be expected to become even more so. For, at the same time that professors of Christianity (though not all) have become more enlightened and tolerant, the gradual education of the generally ignorant people among whom Mohammedanism prevails is revealing to them the defects of their sole code of religion and morals, the Koran, and at the same time the vast superiority of the ‘Books’ of the Jews and Christians, on which the Koran itself is based ; and the result of the knowledge thus acquired must be the eventual reception of those ‘Books’ in the place of that of their own Prophet and lawgiver.

A great deal has been said of late respecting the Wahabee movement in the East, which is a sort of Mohammedan revival, similar in spirit, if not in character, to the revivals that from time to time have agitated Christendom ; its object being the re-generation of Islam, which by the founder of this new sect, Abd-el-Wahad, is declared to have departed from its original purity. The main point contended for by these fanatics is avowedly the principle, inculcated by Mohammed after the example of Jesus, of the equality of all men before God and their fellow-men ; only by this these Wahabees, like the Communists of Christendom, do not understand merely a living principle intended to regulate

men's conduct towards one another, but an organization, giving to all its members equal material rights and interests, and thus, under the specious name of Socialism, overturning the whole social system. But although Communism in its various forms, whether in Europe or in Asia, may temporarily do much harm, it cannot become permanent; because, instead of making men free, as it professes to do, it renders them slaves, by depriving them of their individual liberty of action if not even of thought; whereby it is opposed not less to the instincts than to the interests of the community at large. Wahabeeism cannot therefore be expected to effect any material change in the destinies of Mohammedanism.

By many at the present day it is contended that the doctrine of liberty, equality, and fraternity taught by Jesus implies equality in the distribution of temporal wealth, the community of goods, the annihilation of individual property; and that, in fact, the practice of the early Christian Church was that of the Essenes, who were truly Communists in the strictest sense of the term.

It is, however, a fundamental error to imagine these to be the principles of Christianity. Jesus preached no such doctrine, nor was it that of the primitive Church. It may be true that, in this respect as in so many others, some of the early disciples did not enter into the spirit of their Master's teaching, and that in their anxiety to obey him they construed his words too literally. But nothing of the sort ought properly to be inferred from conduct such as that of Barnabas and other members of the infant Congregation, who, being 'possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need'*'. Such gifts were simply acts of 'charity' or brotherly love for the benefit of the poor and needy, like those of the founder of Guy's Hospital, of George Peabody, of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, and so many other benefactors of their fellow-creatures, to whom no one would dream of imputing a tinge of such levelling doctrines.

* Acts iv. 34, 35.

It is further manifest, from what is related of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, that even theirs was no enforced community of goods, like that of the Essenes, but simply a free-will offering of 'charity'; and that they were punished, not for withholding their property from the common fund, but for their gross, and at the same time needless, deceit and falsehood respecting it. The words of the Apostle Peter are quite explicit:—'Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God' *.

It was in a decidedly anti-communistic sense that Paul said, 'Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.' Acts of real charity must be the spontaneous result of the love of God and of one's neighbour. When they arise from any ostentatious feeling, such as that so forcibly condemned by Jesus †, then the Pharisaical almsgiving is indeed nothing but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. But, on the other hand, when they are exacted and enforced by any law or custom, civil, ecclesiastic, socialistic, or otherwise, it is a mere truism to say that they cease to be voluntary gifts, and become, instead, a tribute or legal obligation. With Communism there can be no charity, no freewill offerings of brotherly love: the two are incompatible.

It will not be denied that at times Jesus appeared to condemn the rich and commend the poor, and to insist on the obligation of the former to relinquish their wealth for the benefit of the latter. But these were abstract principles expressed in the figurative and hyperbolical language of Orientals, and, like other abstract principles, are not to be construed with literal strictness. Besides which, the conduct of the teacher himself must always be borne in mind. His direction to the young man, who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, was that he should sell all that he had and distribute unto the poor ‡; but this was, in truth (as has been suggested in a previous Chapter §) an intimation that

* Acts v. 4.

† Matth. vi. 1-4.

‡ Luke xviii. 22.

§ Chapter VIII. page 104.

the questioner should follow the speaker's own example. The addition made by Jesus that by so doing he 'should have treasure in heaven,' shows that he was only repeating the maxim in the Book of Proverbs, 'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Eternal; and that which he hath given will He pay him again' *; and his comment on the young man's rejection of his advice,—'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! for it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God' †,—is not only explained by the words attributed to our Lord in the second Gospel, where the same incident is recorded—'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!' ‡—but it is further exemplified in the following solemn parable:—'The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' §

The application of this parable is unquestionable; for that application is made by our Lord himself. It is addressed not to the rich, as the possessors of wealth making proper use of it, but to the selfish and covetous, who think only of themselves and not of others. 'Take heed,' exclaimed he, before beginning the parable, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth' ||. And then, after relating the fate of this selfish rich man, he adds by way of moral, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God' ¶.

* Prov. xix. 17.

† Luke xviii. 24, 25.

‡ Mark x. 24.

§ Luke xii. 16-20.

|| Luke xii. 15.

¶ Luke xii. 21.

This parable strikes at the foundation of the notion that Jesus was a preacher of Communism, which notion is completely overturned by his stern reply to the man who wished him to desire his brother to divide his inheritance with him,—‘Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?’*—which was, in fact, the occasion for the parable of the covetous rich man just cited.

Another important consequence of this doctrine of universal love is the bounden duty of every member of society to submit to the civil ordinances of that society, without which must ensue anarchy and disorder,—the rupture of all those bonds which, whilst restraining and seeming to coerce each individual member, retain him in his proper place, and better enable him to do his duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him. Submission to the civil authorities in all matters fiscal and administrative is enforced by the emphatic precept of Jesus, when his opinion was asked as to the lawfulness of paying tribute to the Roman government of Judæa. ‘Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s’† is but an application of the general principle of submission to the Will of God, from whom all power is derived; and the amplification of this precept is thus given by the Apostle, who was so fully embued with the spirit of his Master:—‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tri-

* Luke xii. 14.

† Matth. xxii. 21.

bute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law' *.

In this, it will be perceived, the great Jewish Apostle of the Gentiles sums up the whole duty of man in the very same words of the Law of Moses—‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ †—that his Master had used before him. Does it require anything further to prove the true character of the ‘new’ Commandment, which the fourth Gospel so falsely, and at the same time so ignorantly, attributes to our Lord ‡? And is anything beyond this requisite to explain and, it may almost be said, to excuse the erroneous notions that Jews and other unbelievers in Christianity entertain of this faith, when its teachers themselves are so radically mistaken respecting its very principles?

But whilst our Lord insisted on the duty of every member of the Christian Congregation, of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, to submit in all secular matters to the temporal authorities, as God’s delegates, he was not less precise in his injunctions that his disciples should not submit to human ordinances in matters of religion, adding example to precept by breaking down the barriers between Man and his Maker, which had been raised by a selfish and bigoted priesthood, and were maintained by the whole clerical party. Whilst insisting on the observance of the Law of Moses, he strenuously endeavoured to make his hearers understand the difference between the letter and the spirit, the former of which killeth and the latter giveth life §. The Law had been so hedged round with glosses and traditions, that its original meaning and intention had become lost, and in their place was substituted a mass of superstitious ceremonies and observances

* Rom. xiii. 1–10.

† Levit. xix. 18.

‡ See above, page 202.

§ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

that were most hard to bear, and yet might at any moment be dispensed with by means of the most miserable and despicable casuistry. To Jesus it was a duty, and at the same time a pleasure, to violate the rules of these self-constituted interpreters of the oracles of God, and to hold them up to the derision and contempt of the people.

The observance of the Sabbath, for instance, had been rendered by the traditionists a pretext for the grossest superstitions, which were carried by them to the height of absurdity. To these Jesus made a systematic opposition, never hesitating to disregard the rules that had been established in defiance of the laws of nature and of common sense. His saying that ‘the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath’*, cut at the root of the sanctimonious scruples of those ritualists. It was right and proper to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest, but not to make it a pretext for abstaining from acts of necessity, of duty, of mercy, or of recreation †.

The same with respect to their Pharisaical ablutions ‡, which, whilst cleansing the outward man, left his soul impure §. Jesus taught his disciples that ‘out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man’||. And, in sum, in all his infringements of the ceremonial Law, our Lord looked not to the observance of the strict letter of the written Law, but to its intention and spiritual import.

It was only natural that, by conduct such as this, Jesus should have excited the animosity of the whole clerical party. What the consequences of this were will form the subject of a subsequent Chapter ¶. But it must here be remarked that the teaching and practice of our Lord and his immediate disciples might have been expected to serve as a sufficient admonition to those who came after them against the introduction into the infant Congregation of a sacerdotal class, similar in some respects to

* Mark ii. 27. † Luke vi. 9, xiii. 15, xiv. 5. ‡ Matth. xv. 2.

§ Mark vii. 3-9. || Math. xv. 19, 20.

¶ See Chapter XVIII.

that under the Mosaic Law, but far more injurious to the Congregation generally than that could possibly have been ; because the Israelitish priesthood was hereditary, and thus aristocratic in the best sense, whereas the Christian hierarchy is self-elected and oligarchical—an aristocracy of the worst character, and most injurious to the community at large. Added to which, the latter has arrogated to itself divine powers, to which the former made no pretensions, except perhaps in the person of the High Priest, the descendant and successor of Aaron, and then only on rare occasions, when performing his highest sacerdotal functions. It must further be borne in mind that the Israelitish priesthood was established on account of the ceremonial Law and the service of the Tabernacle,—afterwards of the Temple; and when this latter was done away with, the necessity for a separate sacerdotal class ceased to exist. Even whilst such a class did continue, the minds of its members were full of their ministerial occupations, so that they were little competent to raise their thoughts to spiritual things; and the whole Scripture history shows that the priests were far from being the exclusive interpreters of the Divine oracles. The prophets soon assumed their place ; and the Messiah came to complete their final suppression, and to constitute himself alone the head of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and the only Mediator between God and men.

It is a mere human fallacy, originating in the greed for power of crafty and ambitious men, to pretend that our Lord or his immediate disciples established a separate sacerdotal class, derived from them by direct appointment and perpetual succession. This subject has been so ably discussed and elucidated by many pious and learned members of the Christian church, that it is unnecessary to dwell on it here. It will only be remarked that the Christian hierarchy, in their assumption of supernatural powers imparted to them by ‘Apostolic succession,’ are the imitators of the Roman College of Augurs rather than of the Jewish priesthood.

The assumed transmission of the Holy Spirit from one sinful

man to another by simple contact, the pretended power to transmute the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper into our Lord's own flesh and blood, the arrogated authority to remit sins, the enforced celibacy of the clergy,—these and other abuses were but partially got rid of in the Western Churches at the time of the Reformation. In the Eastern Churches, the wall of separation between the clergy and the laity raised up by Rome does not exist. In them, as in the Israelitish Church, it has never been ruled that religious light and instruction are confined to the clergy ; but the royal priesthood of every member of the Christian Congregation—of God's Kingdom on earth—is fully recognized in theory, though it may not be enforced in practice. The 'Old Catholic' movement in Germany is evidently tending in the same direction. Dr. Döllinger, in his reply to the Catholics of Hungary, is reported to have said that they were the first to perceive clearly that the legally regulated participation of laymen in the ordering and administration of the affairs of the 'Church' is the one thing most needed ; as in this participation they will find the proper means of casting off the despotism of the clergy.

The fiction of a mystically endowed sacerdotal class could hardly have been maintained, had it not been for that which is perhaps the grossest and most palpable of all the abuses existing within the pale of the Christian Church, namely, the appropriation to themselves by the clergy of the name, functions, and authority of the 'Church,' as if this title belonged to them exclusively, and not to the Laity or Congregation generally, of whom they are properly not the masters but the ministers and servants. The Pope of Rome, with hypocritical humility, styles himself 'servus servorum,' but only that he may lord it over the consciences of the true 'Church,' that is to say, the Congregation ; and his example is followed, in a greater or less degree, by all priests who pretend to belong to a class distinct from the majority of the community, and as superior to them as the Brahmins are to the rest of the Hindoos.

We have only to look to the original meaning of the name 'Church,' to see how grossly it has been and still is misapplied.

By this it is not intended to speak of the etymological significance of the word,—which in the English and kindred tongues may or may not be correctly derived from the Greek *κυριακον*, or perhaps rather from *κυριον οικος*, similarly to the Ethiopic ‘Bēta-kristian,’—but of the idea it represents; namely, that of the ‘Εκκλησια, an expression which has been adopted into the Latin in the form of ‘Ecclesia,’ and thence in a somewhat similar form into all derived or cognate languages. Now nothing can be more certain than the meaning of this term. The ‘Ecclesia’ was a heathen institution, it being an assembly of such persons as were summoned or ‘called’ to it, from the verb ἐκκαλεω, ‘to call out’ or ‘forth,’ ‘to summon.’ Properly such an ‘Ecclesia’ or assembly should be duly summoned; but we find the term applied to the meeting (‘Ecclesia’) hurriedly called together in the Temple of Diana at Ephesus by Demetrius the silversmith*; which was clearly not a lawful assembly, convened in the ordinary manner, but a ‘confused’ and ‘uproarious’ one, such as we might suppose an irregular and disorderly meeting of the freemen of the Goldsmiths’ Company, or any other of the city companies, in the Guildhall of London, which ‘the town-clerk, on hearing of it, would hasten to disperse, telling the persons so assembled that they ‘were in danger to be called to account for this day’s uproar, there being no cause whereby they might give an account of this concourse.’ And when he had thus spoken, Mr. Town Clerk would dismiss the assembly, meeting, or congregation of the Goldsmiths’ Company, just as the prudent town-clerk of Ephesus dismissed the ‘Εκκλησια † of silversmiths that Demetrius had informally called together.

The ‘Ecclesia’ being, then, a heathen institution, meaning an assembly ‘called together’ or summoned, the term became applied ‘unto them which were called’ (*αἵτοις τοις κλητοῖς*)‡ to be members of the Kingdom of Heaven, first by John the Baptist, as the precursor of the Messiah, and afterwards by the Messiah himself; and it necessarily comprises the entire Christian Congregation or ‘Church,’ the ‘Household of God.’ It is therefore manifest that

* See Acts xix. 24, 32, 39, 41.

† Acts xix. 41.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 24.

the appropriation of the term to themselves by the Christian clergy is utterly unjustifiable; especially as it is in direct opposition to the declaration of Tertullian, that to form an ‘Ecclesia’ or ‘Church’—that is to say an Assembly or Congregation of Christians—no priests or clergy are needed; for that where three *laymen* are, there is a ‘Church’ or Congregation. And the force of this expression is very marked, inasmuch as the *λαος*, ‘laity,’ comprises not merely the *δημός*, ‘plebs,’ or free citizens, but the population at large, including the bondsmen, slaves, or servants, whom there is express warrant for including within the ‘Ecclesia’*, or Congregation of ‘them which are called.’

As long as any one class of men claim to possess the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, they are participators in the fraud of them who first pretended that those Keys were delivered by our Lord Jesus to his disciple Simon Peter. If the argument in a preceding Chapter† is invalid, those Keys have always remained, and still are, in the hands of the Messiah himself, who is the only mediator between God and men, and alone can give us sinful mortals access to the presence of the Almighty in the world to come; whilst, as members of the Congregation—‘Ecclesia’ or ‘Church’—of believers in him here on earth, we are all true brethren, the ‘elect’ children of God, ‘and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Messiah; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together’‡.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

It is a fact deserving of special notice that the learned, critical, and sceptical M. Renan should implicitly believe the Apostle John

* See the texts cited above, page 206.

† Chapter XII. pages 150–157.

‡ Rom. viii. 17.

to be the author of the fourth Gospel, and that in consequence of this belief he should base many of his arguments on the assumption that that writer's statements are of preponderating authority, on account of their being those of the most intimate of Jesus's companions, and an eye-witness of the events which he professes to record. This is especially the case with respect to the Last Supper of our Lord, which M. Renan says did not take place at the Jewish Passover, but on the previous Thursday, on which day it was commemorated in the primitive Church; and that subsequently the mistake of a day was made, as is shown by the synoptical Gospels. And accepting as a fact, on the authority of the fourth Gospel, that Jesus died on the very day on which the Paschal Lamb was killed and eaten, the French scholar contends that the institution of the Eucharist did not form part of the Last Supper. He also relies on the corroborative authority of the Talmud*, which in like manner makes Jesus to have died on the vigil or eve of the Passover.

This reliance on the authority of the fourth Gospel and of the Talmud, this insisting on the dogma of the Catholic Church in opposition to the express assertions of the writers of the three other Gospels and of St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians†, this flying in the face of the notorious and incontrovertible facts of the Quartodeciman controversy (when this question was mooted and sifted to the bottom), this defiance of all history, is truly a curious psychological phenomenon.

The reason why the Talmud adopts the views of the fourth Gospel is, that from a very early period these were the dominant opinions of all Christendom, and indeed continued to be so until the more general study of the Scriptures, consequent on the Reformation, enabled Christians to form a truer estimate of their Lord's character and history. Thus it is that the Jews, as a rule, know only the 'Jesus Christ' of the fourth Gospel, and are ignorant of Jesus the 'Christ,' or Messiah, of the synoptical Gospels and of St. Paul. It is the same with the Mohammedans and their Koran.

* *Sanhed.* 43a, 67a.

† 1 Cor. xi. 23-26.

Without reference to the dogmas of the Catholic Church, which cannot be allowed to stand against historical facts, nothing is more certain than that Jesus kept the national feast of the Passover with his disciples, precisely as the rest of his countrymen kept it, and that he did not suffer death on the Cross till the following day. In the first Gospel it is expressly said: ‘And they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve’*. In the second Gospel the words are: ‘And they made ready the Passover. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat’†, &c. The third Gospel is even more precise, for it says: ‘And they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve Apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’‡. In addition to which, in all three Gospels, as well as in St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians§, the breaking of the bread and the giving of the cup are described as forming essential portions of ‘the Lord’s Supper,’ the last meal of which Jesus partook on earth.

In the fourth Gospel, bearing the name of St. John, it is altogether different. There it is said, ‘Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself’||, and so proceeded to wash the disciples’ feet. After which, he sat down again with them, and made to them a long discourse on various subjects, doctrinal, allegorical, and mystical, but having no relation whatever to the institution of ‘the Lord’s Supper,’ which is

* Matth. xxvi. 19, 20.

† Mark xiv. 16–18.

‡ Luke xxii. 13–15.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 23–26.

|| John xiii. 1–4.

very ingeniously passed over in this ‘copia verborum,’ without even the slightest allusion being made to the subject.

The reason for this variation in the fourth Gospel will be apparent, when we take into consideration the changes to which this institution of the Lord's Supper was subjected. The breaking and eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup, which Jesus commanded to be done in remembrance of him, formed, strictly speaking, no portion of the Paschal meal; nor was it considered so to be by the early disciples, who construed their Lord's instructions literally, and performed this solemn act of communion ‘as often as’ they met together at meals. This communion of bread and wine was thus made to form an essential portion of the ‘Agapai’ or Love-feasts, the excess and abuse of which was severely reprobated by the Apostle Paul*, and eventually led to the separation of the two, the Lord's ‘Supper’ being gradually transferred from the evening till the following morning. Of this a remarkable instance occurred when Paul and his companions stopped at Troas on their way from Ephesus to Macedonia. We read that, ‘upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight’†. Now the first day of the week of these Jews was Saturday evening, when, after the termination of the Sabbath, they met to break bread. But before sitting down to the meal, Paul preached to them,—‘said grace,’ or ‘asked a blessing,’ as we might now express it,—and went on speaking until midnight, that is to say, till it was Sunday morning, according to the civil computation of time. So long did the Apostle continue his discourse, that Eutychus, one of his hearers, fell asleep, and fell down and was taken up for dead; but Paul restored him to life. And afterwards we read that, ‘When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed’‡; the supper of Saturday night—‘the first day of the week’—not having been partaken of till after midnight on the morning of Sunday. After

* 1 Cor. xi. 20-34.

† Acts xx. 7.

‡ Acts xx. 11.

this the Apostle departed, and in so doing afforded a precedent for Sunday travelling to those who may think that St. Paul's example ought to be followed.

The Lord's Supper having been permanently transferred from the evening to the morning of the first day of the week,—from Saturday evening to Sunday morning,—the partaking of it became so 'developed,' both in rite and in doctrine, that the disciples of its institutor would fail to recognize it in the Eucharist, or Mass, or Holy Communion, of Catholic Christendom.

On the other hand, whilst these changes were taking place in the Eucharistic portion of the Lord's Supper, that part of it which consisted of the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, as a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from the house of bondage, had become quite immaterial to the Gentile converts, and in itself unmeaning; though, from its close coincidence with the Crucifixion of the Messiah, it was seen that it might be made most significant as a type, if only it could be brought to coincide in date with the latter event, which would thus become the sacrifice of 'the Lamb of God.' And this was apparently the motive for ante-dating the Last Supper of Jesus, so as to make his Crucifixion to coincide with the killing of the Paschal Lamb.

But then another difficulty arose. The Paschal meal was no longer celebrated by the Christians as it had been and continued to be by the Jews. Among the latter the Passover is essentially of a festive character, a day of general rejoicing; and, as was only natural, it seemed to the Gentile converts an anomaly that this feast should be celebrated on the anniversary of the Lord's Crucifixion, which they themselves kept as a day of mourning and fasting; though were this momentous event to be regarded by Christians generally in the right light, they would keep the Feast of the Sacrifice of the Messiah as gladly and as thankfully as the Jews continue to hold that of the Passover. Indeed, were they to do so, they would only be following the example of the Apostle Paul, whose character and conduct are so entirely misunderstood as to lead the Duke of Somerset to make the following observations:—'At the period when Paul proclaimed this doctrine

[of the Atonement?] many disciples were still living who had accompanied Jesus in his wanderings, following him day by day to listen to his holy words, to imbibe, if possible, something of his divine thoughts, to watch the sublime devotion of his life, to weep over his agonizing death. What must these disciples have felt when they beheld Paul the Pharisee rejoicing over that death, expressing no contrition for the share which the Pharisees had in the Crucifixion, and shedding no tear on the page which recorded the sufferings of Jesus' *.

How those disciples actually did feel is sufficiently proved by the Scripture History when rightly construed. As is shown in a subsequent Chapter † of the present work, they manifested little sympathy with their Master's sufferings: what they felt and said was, 'We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel'; and when, through the influence of the Divine Spirit, they came to understand that that redemption had, in fact, been accomplished, though not in the sense they had contemplated, they also had reason, like Paul, to look on their Lord's death as a subject of rejoicing rather than of mourning.

This mistaken and morbid feeling on the part of the Gentile converts could not fail to lead to a speedy difference of ritual. The Asiatic Churches, which still retained a strong Jewish element, followed the example of Jesus and his Apostles, and continued to celebrate the Lord's last Paschal supper on the evening of the full moon of the 14th-15th of Nisan. In the Western Churches, on the other hand, the Friday of the Passion Week was observed as the day of the Lord's death, without regard to the day of the month on which it might happen to fall. This was, however, no arbitrary change. The Resurrection of the Lord having occurred on the first day of the week, Sunday,—or, to speak quite precisely, during the night between Saturday and Sunday,—this day soon became the weekly feast of the Christian Church, it being called the Lord's Day, in contradiction to the Sabbath or Saturday, the feast-day of the Jews. Hence it was only natural that among the Gentile converts the Lord's Day

* 'Christian Theology' &c. pp. 130, 131. † Chapter XIX. page 258, *sq.*

should have been fixed on as that of the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection. But this fixation of the day of the Resurrection necessarily caused the like fixation of the day of the Crucifixion on the third day inclusive before it; and accordingly this latter was placed on the Friday preceding the Festival of the Resurrection, or Easter Sunday. The determination of the date of Easter by reference to the Paschal full-moon was, however, still retained; only, instead of determining the date of the Passover itself by that of the full-moon, and then regulating by this the days of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, which might thereby have fallen on any days of the week, they first settled dogmatically that this latter Feast should be always celebrated on the Sunday next after the Paschal full-moon, and then regulated the day of the Crucifixion accordingly. By this means the actual Jewish Feast of the Passover became of no account.

The question between the Eastern and Western Churches first distinctly manifested itself in history on the occasion of the visit to Rome of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, in the time of Anicetus, Bishop of the former city, about the middle of the second century, A.D. 157-168. At that time the rituals of the two Churches had become quite distinct; and each of those two reverend fathers tried to bring the other over to his practice, but in vain. For neither could Anicetus induce Polycarp to relinquish the observance of the Jewish Passover, inasmuch as the latter affirmed that these things had always been so observed by John, the disciple of the Lord, and by the other Apostles, with whom he had been conversant; nor, on the other hand, could Polycarp succeed in persuading Anicetus to observe the Jewish Passover; for the latter maintained that he was bound to adhere to the usage of the Presbyters who had preceded him. Still, this difference of opinion notwithstanding, the two Bishops kept fellowship with each other; and Anicetus, by way of showing respect to Polycarp before the congregation, conceded to him the celebration of the Eucharist; so that they parted from one another in peace, and maintained peace throughout the whole Church, both those who did and those who did not observe the Jewish Passover*.

* Irenæus, in Eusebius, 'Ecclesiastical Hist.' v. 20.

From this remarkable statement of Irenæus, who himself personally knew the Apostle John, he having been ordained by him or in his presence in about A.D. 100, two conclusions are to be drawn. The first is, that, as the aged Polycarp appealed to the personal example of John, the beloved disciple of our Lord, and the other Apostles,—who as pious Jews differed from the rest of their co-religionists in nothing but the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and therefore celebrated the feast of the Jewish Passover as he had done,—it is certain that at the time of Polycarp's visit to Rome the fourth Gospel could not have been written, or at all events not that portion of it wherein the direct contrary is asserted. And therefore it may not unreasonably be inferred that, in consequence of the practice of St. John having been thus held up and appealed to by his disciple Polycarp, the only effectual way of neutralizing this appeal to his authority was to make him appear to declare the direct contrary in the Gospel which was palmed off upon Christendom under his name, by falsifying the day on which the Last Supper of our Lord was eaten. Was it not 'for the good of Holy Church' that uniformity should be maintained within its pale?

The other conclusion is, that, as Bishop Anicetus did not appeal to the authority of Peter, the Prince of Apostles, the Vicar of Christ, the possessor of the keys of heaven and hell, but to that of 'the Presbyters who had preceded him,' we may be quite certain that Peter had never been Bishop of Rome before him, or even one of the 'Presbyters' of that Church; otherwise Anicetus would not have failed to appeal to him, just as Polycarp appealed to John and the other Apostles. And it is also quite certain that the Jew Simon bar Jonah, so noted for his Judaizing tendencies, would have been as constant as the son of Zebedee, if not even more so, in following the example of their Master in respect of the celebration of the Jewish Passover.

In this controversy between Polycarp and Anicetus it is further worthy of remark that the former, as the representative of the Eastern Churches, was of the orthodox party; whilst it was the Romish Bishop who was heterodox. In this Rome gave its

first proof of heterodoxy ; its second great proof was in the addition of ‘*filioque*’ to the orthodox Nicene Creed. Another was the introduction of the New Style, which, according to Oriental notions, is as arbitrary a changing of the Feast Days of the Church as was the alteration of the date of the Paschal festival.

Though the venerable fathers Polycarp and Anicetus parted in peace, without allowing a question, which they both felt to be of no spiritual importance, to cause discord between them and the congregations under their charge respectively, it was not so with their successors, between whom the controversy raged during a century and a half with unceasing vigour and increased virulence, without any prospect of the question being settled, till the Gordian knot was cut by the hand of the Emperor Constantine. As a still unbaptized heathen, inclined towards Christianity more on account of its political importance than from any true religious feeling, Constantine may have cared little for the difference of ritual between the Eastern and Western Churches ; but as a sovereign he must have been shocked at the want of uniformity, and doubtless also at the ill-blood it engendered between the two branches of what had then become the most powerful and influential institution in the vast Roman Empire. The Church appeared, said Athanasius, to be halting on one leg. The sight of some Churches feasting on the day when others were fasting, and of two Passovers in one year, was opposed to the very idea of Christian unity ; and as a proof of how completely Christianity had lost sight of its origin, and of its total forgetfulness of the fact that Jesus himself was born a Jew, lived a Jew, ate the Paschal Lamb as a Jew, died a Jew, and was glorified on the Cross as ‘the King of the Jews,’—the chosen people of the Eternal and of His Messiah—‘the Lord and his Christ,’—it was actually contended that the celebration of the Passover on the same day as that on which it was kept by the miscreant Jews, who had put the Saviour to death, was an impious absurdity !

Accordingly, by the solemn decree of the pagan Emperor in his Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, the Friday before Easter Sunday was declared to be the day of the Christian Passover, and not the

fourteenth of the month Nisan ; and ere long all the Churches throughout the empire conformed their ritual to this decree.

It has been seen that the Apostle John was the chief authority appealed to by his own personal disciple Polycarp in support of his contention for the celebration of the Paschal Feast on the Jewish Passover, in accordance with the fact, so very plainly and unequivocally stated in the three historical Gospels, that our Lord himself kept it on that day. And yet in the fourth Gospel we read the direct contrary ; it being there asserted not only that the Lord's Supper was eaten 'before the Passover,' but also that the trial of Jesus took place on 'the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour' * ; so that the moment of our Lord's death upon the Cross is made to coincide with that of the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, which, on the evidence of the three historical Gospels, he had himself actually eaten nearly twenty-four hours previously ! If there were nothing besides this palpably false statement to guide us, it would be sufficient to determine not only the animus but likewise the status of the writer of the fourth Gospel. He was not the Apostle John : he was not even a Jewish believer. He was a Gentile Christian, who wrote in the interest of the Anti-Jewish party, and took on himself the name of the beloved disciple, in order that he might the more readily impose on the ignorant and credulous ; and this he has done most effectually, when even a scholar and a sceptic like M. Renan is brought to believe in him.

In eating the Passover with his disciples, Jesus performed his last ceremonial act as a Jew. Though all that he did on the occasion is not described by the historians, who naturally enough thought of recording what related to the future rather than to the past, there are sufficient particulars mentioned in the first three Gospels to show that the feast was kept by Jesus and his disciples in accordance with the practice of their co-religionists, as handed down to the present day, and as will now be briefly described, principally on the authority of the learned Dr. Lightfoot†.

At the institution of the Passover the people stood, each with

* John xix. 14.

† 'Works,' i. 951-957.

his loins girded, his shoes on his feet, and his staff in his hand, ready for his departure after the hurried meal*. Afterwards, when eating, they sat or reclined, with the ease becoming free men, who were to remember that when their ancestors stood at the first celebration they had adopted the posture of slaves: not even the poorest in Israel might eat till he was seated. Accordingly we read that Jesus ‘sat down with the twelve’†.

From what is stated in the third Gospel‡ it is to be inferred that Jesus, who as the head of the household was the celebrant, began the meal by filling the first cup of wine, and asking the usual blessing ‘for the day and for the cup.’ In accordance with a rabbinical tradition, perpetuated in the ritual of the Christian Church, the wine was mixed with water, not for any mystical reason, as is now pretended, but because this was considered to be the best way of using the best wine. The statement in the fourth Gospel that, when Jesus was on the Cross, ‘one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water’§, is a fiction, invented for the purpose of giving a mystical Christian origin to an ancient Jewish practice.

After the first cup of wine it is usual for all present to wash their hands, with the customary blessing, which practice Jesus would probably not have dispensed with on this solemn occasion, as he had done at other times when sitting down to meals with ‘publicans and sinners’; but whether he did so or not is immaterial.

On the table were then placed the unleavened bread, a salad of bitter herbs, and a sauce called Kharesoth, consisting of dates, figs, raisins, vinegar, &c., and afterwards the Paschal Lamb, roasted whole, in front of Jesus himself, who, with a blessing, first dipped a portion of the salad in the Kharesoth and ate it, his example being followed by the others.

After the bitter herbs had thus been eaten, the dishes were removed, and a second cup of wine was filled and brought to the celebrant. But before drinking it, the national custom is for the

* Exod. xii. 11.

† Matth. xxvi. 20; Mark xiv. 18.

‡ Luke xxii. 17, 18.

§ John xix. 34.

children or proselytes who may be present to inquire, in accordance with the text, Exod. xii. 26, the meaning of the feast; when, in reply, an account is given by the master of the feast of the sufferings of the Israelites in the house of bondage, and of their deliverance, with express reference to the text, Deut. xxvi. 5. If no such persons are present, the explanation is still given on ordinary occasions; but perhaps Jesus may have dispensed with it as unnecessary, and availed himself, in its stead, of the pause to explain to his disciples that one of them would betray him, which led to the conversation between him and Judas*, who, with the zeal common to all renegades, had undertaken to act as a guide to those who should be sent to arrest his Master, but, in order to avoid suspicion, had joined Jesus and his companions, and eaten the Passover with them.

The dishes, which had been taken off the table, being then replaced, Jesus repeated the usual commemorative words that opened what was strictly the Paschal meal. This portion of the ceremony can no longer be observed by his co-religionists; for, as the Paschal Lamb could be legally slain and the blood of it offered only 'in the place where the Eternal should chose to place His name there'†, it was necessarily discontinued by the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem. Hence the Passover Feast of the modern Jews consists only of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The celebrant then recited the 113th and 114th Psalms, being part of the great Hallel or Thanksgiving, after which he drank of the second cup of wine, which was passed round to the others.

They then all washed their hands again, after which Jesus took one of the cakes of unleavened bread in his hand and brake it, giving thanks (that is to say reciting the usual Jewish blessing), and gave it unto his disciples, saying, 'This is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me'‡. The portions of bread thus distributed were then dipped by the recipients, together with the bitter herbs, into the Kharesoth and eaten by them. It would have been now, if at all, that Jesus gave the 'sop'

* Matth. xvi. 25.

† Deut. xvi. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24; Matth. xvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; Luke xxii. 19.

to Judas, as is stated in the fourth Gospel*; though as such an incident is quite immaterial, it is not requisite to lay any stress on it. As to the further statement in that Gospel that Judas, 'having received the sop then went out immediately,' it is highly improbable he should have done so. On the contrary, it is much more natural that he should have waited till the meal was finished, and gone out with the rest, and then left them.

The bread having thus been distributed by Jesus and eaten by the disciples, they next all ate the flesh of the Paschal Lamb, with bread, and also with the salad and Kharesoth as they might think fit; and then they again washed their hands, and a third cup of wine, known especially as 'the cup of blessing,' was filled, over which the customary blessing, or grace after meat, and the blessing or thanks for the wine, were recited. It was here that Jesus said 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me'†. From the various forms in which our Lord's words are given by St. Paul and in the three Gospels‡, it is manifest that there is no sacramental force in the words themselves.

A fourth cup, being that of the Hallel or Thanksgiving, was then drunk. The rabbinical tradition strictly enjoins that there shall never be less than four cups of wine provided at the Paschal feast, even of the poorest Israelite. Dr. Lightfoot considers this fourth cup to have been that of the New Testament, being led to this conclusion apparently by Jesus's declaration, when giving the cup to his disciples, 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom'§. But this would be construing our Lord's words too literally. He only meant that on no future occasion would he drink wine with them. How frequently do we say, when about to part from a friend, that we shall not see one another again for a long while; and yet we go on seeing one another for some short interval of time after saying so. Besides which, according to the third Gospel, it was

* John xiii. 26.

† 1 Cor. xi. 25.

‡ Math. xxvi. 27, 28; Mark xiv. 24; Luke xxii. 20. § Matth. xxvi. 29.

before the commencement of the meal, and not at the end of it, that Jesus said not only that he would not again drink of the cup, but likewise that he would not any more eat of the Passover until it should be fulfilled in the Kingdom of Heaven*; which is entirely in accordance with the construction now contended for.

After the fourth cup of wine had been drunk, the concluding portion of the Hallel, consisting of Psalms cxv. to cxviii., was recited or sung†, followed as usual by a prayer; and then they all (with the exception of Judas, who here gave them the slip) left the city, for the purpose of returning to their resting-place at Bethany on the Mount of Olives. At the institution of the Passover by Moses, no one was allowed to go out of the door of his house till the morrow‡. But this rule is said to have been observed only on that single occasion. At all events, it did not prevail in our Lord's time.

On their way to Bethany they came to a place called Gethsemane§, or the Oil-press, at the western foot of the Mount, as Bethany was on the further or eastern side of it. In the garden there our Lord went apart about a stone's cast, taking with him only Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, who throughout were his most intimate companions; and then saying to them, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with me;' he went a little further, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt'; and again, 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done'; and this again a third time||.

It is contended by many, that the Agony of our Lord was caused solely by the thought of a violent death, the terror of which pressed more and more heavily on his mind; so that he had need to summon up all his usual courage to maintain his tranquil and heavenly inspired presence of mind. But this is not sufficient. The full explanation must be sought for in his

* Luke xxii. 16.

† Matth. xxvi. 30.

‡ Exod. xii. 22.

§ Matth. xxvi. 36.

|| Matth. xxvi. 37-44.

words shortly afterwards to one of his disciples, who, when his master was arrested, drew his sword and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear:—‘Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?’*

The Agony in the Garden of the Oil-press was a repetition in a minor degree of the Temptation in the Wilderness by Jordan. The Messiah was tempted to throw off his suffering and assume his glorified character, and so perhaps to put off the redemption of the world which he had come to accomplish. As he said to his disciples, ‘The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ He did however what they could not do. He prayed earnestly that he might not be led into temptation; and the spirit overcame the flesh.

In the third Gospel, in which the history had already become legendary, it is added, ‘And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground’†. As evidence of the truth of this statement, there is shown at the present day what is declared to be the very spot, the ‘Grotto of the Agony,’—forming a trio with the Grottoes at Nazareth and Bethlehem,—in which Jesus thus prayed, with the inscription ‘Hic factus est sudor ejus sicut guttae sanguinis decurrentis in terram;’ and in the litanies of the Catholic Church, what in the Gospel is merely stated to have been ‘sicut,’—‘as it were,’—is asserted as a fact, our Lord being adjured by his ‘Agony and Bloody Sweat.’

Near this Grotto of Gethsemane is also shown the identical spot where Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss; which precise identification is only surpassed by that of the spot in Jerusalem, where the cock stood and crew when Simon Peter denied his Master!

* Matth. xxvi. 52-54.

† Luke xxii. 43, 44.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF THE MESSIAH.

OUR Lord had scarcely recovered from his Agony in the garden of Gethsemane and roused his sleeping companions, when Judas Iscariot, who had quitted the party after the Paschal Supper, approached, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves*, commissioned by the chief priests and elders to arrest Jesus. With a view to prevent mistakes and confusion, Judas had given this sign to those who accompanied him :—‘ Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he : hold him fast.’ And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, ‘ Hail, Master’ ! and kissed him †. Nothing could more plainly show the determined and unscrupulous character of Judas than this cold-blooded act of treachery. And yet, perhaps, had his Lord declared himself in the first instance as the temporal King of Israel, no one among his followers would have been a more zealous or resolute partisan, or would more readily have laid down for him a life on which it is evident he placed but little value.

There is one point connected with the arrest of Jesus, which is deserving of notice as an additional proof of the apocryphal character of the fourth Gospel. This arrest took place during the night after the fourteenth of the month, when the moon was precisely at the full, that particular moment having been chosen by Moses for the Exodus of the Israelites, in order that they might have the benefit of the moonlight during the night-journey. The writer of the fourth Gospel, unmindful of this,—or rather being ignorant of it, because he was not a Jew, and ‘ a fortiori’ not the Apostle John, who was present on the occasion, and would never have committed such a blunder,—describes Judas as ‘ coming thither with lanterns and torches’ ‡.

To meet this very awkward difficulty it has been suggested that the men who accompanied Judas were soldiers of the Roman

* Matth. xxvi. 47.

† Ibid. 48, 49.

‡ John xviii. 3.

garrison, who always carried lights on a night-march. But this they could not possibly have been, because it is expressly said in all the Gospels, not excluding even the fourth, that they were people sent by the chief priests and elders*. Besides which, no accusation had yet been made before the Roman governor; so that it could not have been Roman soldiers who made the arrest. And further we read that they who laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the Scribes and the elders were assembled†; whereas a detachment from the garrison would have forthwith conducted their prisoner to the citadel or other military place of confinement.

When Jesus was brought before the Jewish council, or Sanhedrin, thus assembled, they 'sought false witness against him to put him to death, but found none; yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none'‡. Every one who reads with ordinary care the speeches of Jesus recorded in the three historical Gospels will plainly perceive how difficult it must have been to lay hold of what he had said to convict him of any offence,—not against the priests, for that is not what they sought for,—but against the Roman Government, in order that they might have a pretext for accusing him before the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, to be by him put to death. Most completely had he acted up to his own advice to his disciples, 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.'

At the last came two false witnesses, that is to say, witnesses to prove that Jesus had committed some overt act of rebellion or sedition, for which he might be taken before the Roman governor. But all that these could prove was 'This man said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days'§. That these may not have been the words used by our Lord is immaterial; they were quite insufficient for the purpose required.

Before considering the further proceedings, it is expedient to notice the views adopted by M. Renan and others respecting these two 'false witnesses,' who are, inconsistently enough, supposed

* Matth. xxvi. 47; Mark xiv. 43; Luke xxii. 52; John xvii. 3.

† Matth. xxvi. 57. ‡ Matth. xxvi. 59, 60. § Matth. xxvi. 61.

by them to have been the two formal, but *true*, witnesses required by the Jewish law to testify to the fact. The French critic ridicules the ‘naïve impudence’ of the details given in the Talmud of the mode of proceeding against the ‘mesith’—‘seeder’—the propagator of false doctrines, as if there were anything absurd or improper in requiring the positive evidence of two eye-witnesses to establish the truth of so grave a charge; even if, in order to simplify the process, they made the accused criminate himself by repeating his blasphemy or heterodox opinions before two witnesses,—men of good repute, and certainly not ‘false’ witnesses,—who were concealed from sight in an adjoining room or behind a screen, two lighted candles being placed near the culprit, in order that the witnesses might be able faithfully to depose that they had not only heard but seen him. Forms such as these, having become antiquated, may appear ridiculous in the eyes of such as see no sanctity in the institutions of their predecessors, and cannot themselves hope to leave anything to be revered by those who come after them. But certainly this scrupulosity of the Jewish law, which required two independent witnesses to testify to their having both seen and heard what was charged against the accused, is not so absurd as the practice of the Roman civil law; which, whilst like the Jewish law requiring two witnesses, allows one of these witnesses to be the accused himself, and then, in case the evidence required by the law is otherwise insufficient, makes use of the most unjustifiable, and often the most cruel and atrocious, means to compel the person accused to criminate himself, and thus become a witness against himself, so as to make up the number required by the law. How often has a wretched victim of the Inquisition, when on the rack, given false witness against himself, in order to put a stop to the unbearable torture!

M. Renan’s mistake has been caused by his blindly following his blind guide, the writer of the fourth Gospel, whose object it was to represent Jesus as suffering not as the Messiah, the Son of David, but as ‘the Son of God,’ and who accordingly states that when Jesus was brought before the high-priest, the latter asked

him ‘of his disciples and of his doctrine’*. The answer put into the mouth of our Lord is, however, a most natural one, and such as he might be imagined to have given, had such a question been put. He is said to have replied, ‘I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said’†.

It is needless to repeat all that is stated in this most ‘humiliating’ document. But it is important to notice that in it the narrative of the arrest of Jesus finishes by his accusers bringing Jesus to Pilate, without, however, accusing him of any specific crime, and by their not going into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled, and so be unable to eat the Passover, which, according to this ‘false witness,’ had not yet been eaten. So careful was this pretended Jewish writer to give his narrative a ‘couleur locale;’ and yet he forgot all the while that no Jew would have made use of the expression ‘the Jews,’ put by him into the mouth of Jesus when answering the high priest,—that is to say, a Jew speaking to the spiritual head of his nation, and the pretended recorder of his words, the most intimate friend of the accused, being himself a Jew!

Reverting to the veracious narrative of the three historical Gospels, it has to be remarked that when the two false witnesses had given their evidence, Jesus made no reply. On which the high priest arose and said, ‘Answerest thou nothing to what these witness against thee?’ But Jesus held his peace.

By his persistent silence our Lord at length drove Caiaphas to put to him a crucial question:—‘I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Messiah, the Son of God’‡. This was the opportunity our Lord was looking for. He had declined to answer the same question when put to him by the disciples of John the Baptist, because he was not yet sufficiently well known; he had charged his own disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Messiah, because, had the

* John xviii. 19.

† John xviii. 20, 21.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 63.

truth been then divulged, the people would have deemed him to be the Messiah of their own preconceived notions, who was come to restore the temporal kingdom of his forefather David. He now unhesitatingly avowed himself in his true character, because he could do so without injury to the cause for which he was about to suffer. Jesus saith unto him ‘Thou hast said’; which, being an admission, might have been a sufficient answer, as the same was in fact when he subsequently replied to the similar question of Pilate*. But our Lord was not satisfied with this. His answer, literally taken, was that he was truly the Messiah, that is to say, the Anointed King of Israel so anxiously looked for by the Jews; and this might easily have been perverted by the high priest into the avowal of his intention to attempt to restore the temporal kingdom of his ancestor David, or, in other words, to raise the standard of rebellion against the Roman government. To prevent this false interpretation of his words, Jesus hastened to add what was totally uncalled for by the high priest’s adjuration, but nevertheless compelled him to join issue on a totally different question; and, instead of denouncing Jesus to the Roman governor as a rebel, to put in force against the prisoner, as a blasphemer, the utmost rigour of the Mosaical law.

It was with this view, then, that Jesus added ‘Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ On hearing these words the high priest completely lost his presence of mind. He rent his clothes,—an act forbidden to him, and only venial under such exceptional circumstances,—saying, ‘He hath spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.’ Then turning to the other members of the council, he asked, ‘What think ye?’ They answered and said, ‘He is guilty of death’†. And as they read the law, he was so most unquestionably; and had they chosen they might as unquestionably have executed on him the judgment of the law, as they did on the deacon Stephen, when he made use of almost the

* Matth. xxvii. 11.

† Matth. xxvi. 64–66.

same words*. But they would hardly have dared to put the Jewish law in force against one held in such reverence by the multitude, by many of whom it was trusted that it was he who should deliver Israel†. Their only course therefore was to denounce him to the Roman Procurator on his own admission that he was the Messiah, and as such, they would pretend, a claimant of the temporal throne of King David, and consequently a rebel and exciter of sedition.

It is unnecessary to enter into the question as to whether the Jewish authorities had or had not the power to put persons of their own nation to death for offences against their own laws. The presumption is that they had that power; but, if not, it is certain that they might, at all events, have called on the civil authorities to put their judgments into execution, as was the practice within the kingdoms of Europe as long as the Church of Rome retained sufficient influence over the sovereigns of the several States to induce them to carry out its sanguinary decrees against infidels and heretics. But this would not have served their purpose, their object being to obtain his condemnation by the Roman governor himself.

Whilst waiting until it was time to deliver Jesus up to the civil authorities, they treated him with every indignity: they spat in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, 'Prophecy unto us, thou Messiah, Who is he that smote thee?'‡

When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel together against Jesus to put him to death. As the charge of blasphemy or violation of the religious law was not a safe one, both in itself, on account of the multitude, and also because the tolerant Roman governor might reasonably have refused to execute their judgment in respect of such a question, they therefore decided on accusing him of rebellion or sedition. So, when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor§. And Jesus

* Acts vii. 58.

† Luke xxiv. 21.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 67, 68.

§ Matth. xxvii. 1, 2.

stood before the governor, and they began to accuse him, saying, ‘ We found this man perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is the Anointed King,’ or Messiah. In the Greek text of the third Gospel the words are *χριστὸν βασιλέα*, which are translated ‘Christ, a King’*. But this is unmeaning : the sense is as given above.

This was a specific charge of rebellion, or inciting to insurrection, against the Imperial Government. Had there been any reasonable grounds for such a charge, there can be no doubt that the Roman governor would, without a moment’s hesitation, have inflicted condign punishment on the offender, the ‘ *crimen lese majestatis* ’ being one that met with little mercy under the Roman law. Still, though a harsh administrator of the law, Pilate was not an unjust one ; and indeed the maxims of the Roman law required him to administer justice impartially. Now from none of the Gospel narratives does it appear that the accusers of Jesus could bring a tittle of evidence of his having been guilty of any overt act of sedition, of his having incited the people to rebellion, and above all of his forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar ; nor is there, in the whole history, a sign of any conduct on his part that might have come to the governor’s knowledge through other channels, and have been construed into an overt act of treason. This part of the accusation therefore fell to the ground for want of evidence ; and there remained only the charge that Jesus pretended to be the Messiah, or the Anointed King of Prophecy, who was to succeed to the throne of his ancestor King David.

To enable us properly to understand the whole transaction, we will not place ourselves in the position of Pontius Pilate, and decide what we should have done under the circumstances, as is the usual way of considering such questions ; but we will place Pontius Pilate in the analogous position of a representative of the British Government in India. Now, if in our Indian possessions, a man were to profess to be an Incarnation of Vishnu, or the Twelfth Imam, the British authorities would trouble

* Luke xxiii. 2.

themselves very little about him, although he might chose to say he was come to inaugurate a new state of affairs, and even if he went through the streets beating tom-toms, or with banners and music, like some of our friendly—or unfriendly—societies at home, provided only that he did not occasion a breach of the peace. If it were seen that no danger to the State was to be immediately apprehended from his doctrine and practices, but that, on the contrary, he recommended to his followers submission to the constituted authorities,—had expressly said, ‘Render under Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s,’ and emphatically taught that his kingdom was not of this world,—the British authorities would look on him as a harmless enthusiast, undeserving of notice; if, indeed, they might not deem it politic to encourage a preacher who inculcated submission to the powers that be, and peace and good will among the community at large.

Even in the case of a reformer of the national faith, an opposer of the superstitious observances of the native priesthood, like Chuunder Sen, a charge of impiety brought against him by the Brahmins of the sacred city of Benares would not be likely to obtain much favour from the British official, who might, on the contrary, rejoice in his heart to witness this open war against the cherished forms and ceremonies of the idolatrous Hindoos; and this, although he might be far-sighted enough to perceive that the spiritual regeneration of the natives of India, coupled with their rapid strides in intellectual and social improvement, must eventually lead to the establishment of their political freedom, by breaking the yoke of their British rulers, which, in their present degraded state, is seen by the most enlightened spirits among them to be necessary to be borne cheerfully and loyally, if only with a view to their ultimate emancipation from it.

To the practical Roman governor, David and his kingdom would therefore have been as perfectly indifferent as Vishnu and Mohammed to the British official in India. Were he a mere soldier, he might scarcely know more of David than his name. If, on the other hand, he were a scholar, like so many of our British

officers in India, he would have learned that the Messiah was regarded as a claimant of the throne of a king of Israel, who had lived some three centuries before the foundation of Rome by Romulus, and a century before the siege of Troy ! And if a cultivator of belles-lettres, as so many of our officers are likewise, he would hardly have failed to be acquainted with the writings of one Flaccus, the favoured client of Mecænas and a fashionable poet of the age, and to know the verses, often quoted in our own days :—

‘Vixerunt fortis ante Agamemnona
Multi, sed omnes illacrymabiles
Urgentur, ignotique longâ
Nocte.’

Be this as it may, Pilate would have felt and acted like his successor Festus, and like Gallio, the governor of Achaia, and like the town-clerk of Ephesus *, who were all of them officers of a Government which had under its rule nations of many religious persuasions, and of many different opinions and habits on all conceivable points, and whose policy consequently was not to interfere, except in matters affecting the well-being of the State. A substantial practical insurrectionist, like Judas of Gamala of the previous generation, or like the pseudo-Messiah, Bar Cocaba, of the following century, would have been a fitting subject for Cæsar’s representative to adopt violent measures against ; but a theoretical Messiah like Jesus, a king only in idea, was to be treated with supreme indifference. The question, as it must have presented itself to the mind of Pilate, was so perfectly absurd, that had it not been for the respect he felt himself bound to pay outwardly to the religious heads of the nation under his rule, he might well have said to them, in the words of Gallio, ‘ If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you : but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters ’†. And, like the governor of Achaia, he would have driven them

* Acts xviii. 14, 15, xix. 35-41, xxv. 14-27.

† Acts xviii. 14, 15.

from his judgment-seat. Even if the Gentile inhabitants of Jerusalem had taken the accusers and beaten them before Pilate's judgment-seat (as the people of Corinth treated Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue there, for having brought a false accusation against Paul), Pilate, like Gallio, might have 'cared for none of those things'*. Indeed, as there was no friendly feeling existing between him and the Jews, he would doubtless in his heart have thought that they richly deserved such treatment, not only for having brought so frivolous and unfounded a charge against a respectable and inoffensive citizen, but also for troubling him, the representative of the Emperor, with 'a question of words and names' that did not at all concern either the State or himself.

The way in which the transaction is represented in the fourth Gospel is perfectly monstrous. After Jesus had been brought up by the Jews 'from Caiaphas,'—not by the high-priest himself,—to Pilate's hall of judgment, Pilate went out to them, and said, 'What accusation bring ye against this man?' They answered and said unto him, 'If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee,'—a most unsuitable and unlikely answer. Then said Pilate unto them, 'Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.' The Jews therefore said unto him, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,' whereby it is pretended the saying of Jesus was fulfilled, 'signifying what death he should die'†. By means of this 'prophecy,' the writer evades the difficulty that attends the fact of the execution of our Lord under the Roman law. For the offence against that law in claiming to be the king of Israel,—or of 'the Jews,'—and consequently being a rebel against Caesar, is diametrically opposed to the fiction that the Roman governor was merely the executioner of the judgment of the Sanhedrin against him for blasphemy in calling himself 'the Son of God.'

What follows is perfectly inconsistent and unintelligible. It says that Pilate then entered into the judgment-hall again and called Jesus—the two being there alone—and said unto him,

* Acts xviii. 17.

† John xviii. 28-32.

‘Art thou the King of the Jews?’—though it is inconceivable how he could have asked so irrelevant a question, seeing that the alleged crime was against the Jewish law!—Jesus answered him, ‘Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?’* Could anything be more preposterous than all these fancies? Sceptics object to the supernatural in the fourth Gospel: with more reason may they object to the unnatural. Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews’—the ‘Messiah’ delivered to ‘the Jews!’—‘But now is my kingdom not from hence.’ Pilate therefore said unto him, ‘Art thou a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.’ Pilate saith unto him, ‘What is truth?’† To this no reply on the part of our Lord is recorded in the fourth Gospel. But in another apocryphal document of fully equal value, known as the Gospel of Nicodemus, the conversation is thus continued: ‘Jesus saith, “Truth is from heaven.” Pilate saith, “Is not then truth on earth?” Jesus saith to Pilate, “See how those who speak the truth on earth are judged by them who have power upon earth.”’

Leaving these romances, we turn to the plain historical fact, about which there ought to be no question, that Jesus was accused before Pilate of claiming to be the Messiah, and as such pretending to the sovereignty of the kingdom of Israel, or of ‘the Jews,’ as the expression was then vulgarly understood. M. Renan contends, indeed, that Jesus never professed to be the ‘King of the Jews,’ but this is surely a mere play upon words. To the charge of claiming to be the Messiah, the lineal descendant of King David, who had lived more than a thousand years previously, and in this sense to be the King of the Jews,

* John xviii. 33–35.

† John xviii. 36–38.

Jesus pleaded guilty. Beyond this he answered nothing to the many things of which the chief priests accused him; which things were manifestly irrelevant, or they would have been noticed by Pilate in his judgment, or by the several historians. Pilate is, however, recorded to have marvelled greatly at Jesus's silence *, the reason for his wonder doubtless being that the accused should have so patiently put up with the injurious and even foul language, which we may well imagine a number of excited natives of Judæa would have been as capable of using then as at the present day.

When the chief priests and their associates were tired of bringing charges which Jesus did not even condescend to notice, the Roman magistrate delivered his judgment in these words, 'I find no fault in this man'†. The attempt to attach to him criminality against the State in claiming to be the descendant of David—which, from a Roman point of view, would be much like the pretension, here in England, to be a lineal descendant of Alfred the Great—was seen to be merely frivolous and vexatious. But this decision only made the accusers more furious, and they exclaimed, 'He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee to this place'‡.

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man was a Galilean; and as soon as he learned that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod (who also was at Jerusalem at that time, having come to keep the Passover),—heartily rejoiced, no doubt, at having found such a convenient means of getting rid of so troublesome a case. 'And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing'§.

Herod Antipas was a Jew, and therefore understood the popular notion of his nation respecting the Messiah. Had Jesus

* Matth. xxvii. 12-14.

† Luke xxi. 4.

‡ Luke xxi. 5.

§ Luke xxi. 8, 9.

deigned to answer him, as Paul answered his nephew, Herod Agrippa, thirty years afterwards, the former might probably have said to Jesus, as the latter said to Paul, ‘Almost thou persuadest me to believe that thou art really the Messiah’—‘to be a Christian’*. But this was not our Lord’s object. He held his peace; and Herod with his men of war set him at nought,—that is to say, disbelieved him, thought him to be an impostor,—and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, as befitting the title he had so madly assumed, and sent him back again to Pilate †.

From the Jewish prince’s treatment of Jesus, the Roman governor was convinced, even more than before, of the frivolousness of the accusation against him. He therefore called together the chief priests and the rulers of the people, and said unto them, ‘Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and behold, I, having examined him before you,’—the fourth Gospel says that he examined him in private, and afterwards ‘went out again to the Jews’ ‡,—‘have found no fault in him touching those things whereof ye accuse him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death has been done by him’ §. Pilate added, however, ‘I will therefore chastise him and release him;’ by which he must be understood to have meant, that, though he exonerated Jesus from the charge of ‘perverting the people,’ (that is to say maliciously inciting the Jews to rebel against Cæsar in favour of himself as their lawful native sovereign,) still the mere fact of his calling himself, or allowing himself to be called, the King of the Jews, even though without any evil intention, might easily have led to a breach of the peace. In fact, the difficulty with Jesus had been all along to prevent himself from being publicly acclaimed as the Messiah; he well knowing what would have been the inevitable consequences of such a manifestation on the part of an excited populace, chafing under the bonds of their Roman conquerors. For such conduct, then, as provocative to evil, Pilate

* See above, Chapter V. page 66.

† Luke xxiii. 11.

‡ John xviii. 38.

§ Luke xxiii. 13-15.

might well deem the prisoner deserving of a slight beating with ‘virgæ’ or rods, though even in this he would seem to have desired to conciliate the high priest and his party, rather than because he found any fault in Jesus. But this was far from satisfying the accusers, whom nothing less would serve than that Jesus should be condemned to death for the ‘crimen lesee majestatis,’ and Pilate was so weak as at length to give way to them.

The three historical Gospels, though differing slightly in the details, all agree in representing Pilate as most unwilling to condemn Jesus on an unfounded charge; for he knew that for envy they had delivered him. And even after he had passed on him a sentence which involved the penalty of death, Pilate was in hopes he might yet be able to free him, by means of the custom which prevailed, that at the annual national festival the Roman governor should release to the people a prisoner whom they would. Now they had a notable prisoner, named Barabbas, who was under sentence of death for insurrection and murder; therefore, when the people were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, ‘Whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Messiah?’ The people, if left to themselves, might probably have preferred to liberate the prophet of Galilee, of whom they had never heard anything but good, even if they did not all believe him to be the true Messiah, as many of them doubtless did. But, like the populace in all countries and in all ages, they were easily swayed by specious demagogues; and the chief priests and elders easily ‘persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus’*.

When therefore the governor said unto them, ‘Which of the twain will ye that I release unto you?’ they said ‘Barabbas.’ On this Pilate said unto them, ‘What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called the Messiah?’ They all said unto him, ‘Let him be crucified.’ And the governor said, ‘Why, what evil hath he done?’ But they cried out the more, saying, ‘Let him be crucified.’ It was like the cry ‘ad leones,’ afterwards so frequently

* Matth. xxvii. 15-20.

used to express the condemnation of the followers of Jesus at Rome by the demoralized inhabitants of the capital, who cared for nothing as long as they had ‘panem et circenses’—food and the inhuman amusements of the circus. The same rabble that had joined in shouting Hosannas on the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem only a few days previously, now cried out ‘Crucify him !’ But this was as natural to the mob of Jerusalem as it is to the rabble of every other city. When the famous John Wilkes was complimented by a friend on the crowds assembled to greet him on his liberation from the Tower of London, he cynically replied, ‘There would be a much larger crowd to see me if I were going to be hanged !’ And at the present moment, the fate of the Emperor Napoleon, so recently the chosen of millions of Frenchmen, affords a melancholy proof of the little dependance to be placed on the ‘arbitrium popularis auræ.’

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE MESSIAH.

It is unnecessary to enter into all the details of what occurred previously to and during the Crucifixion of our Lord : so well are the facts known by all, that they might have been passed over here with merely a general allusion to them, were it not for the endeavour of M. Renan*—on the authority of the fourth Gospel and of the Talmud!—to represent the condemnation and execution of Jesus, not as having been for treason in setting himself up as the Messiah or King of the Jews, but for blasphemy in declaring himself to be the Son of God. ‘We have a law,’ the chief priests are made to say in the fourth Gospel, ‘and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God’†. But were this the case, the whole history would be inconsistent

* ‘Vie de Jésus,’ p. 415.

† John xix. 7.

and unintelligible. In the first place, the punishment under the law for such an offence would have been stoning*; and that this was carried into effect, is proved by the case of Stephen a short time afterwards†. The sentence of Pilate would therefore have been unnecessary, and even on the supposition that the chief priests and the Sanhedrin had not of themselves the power of life and death, the utmost that would have been requisite was for them to obtain the Roman governor's authority to put their own law in force.

In the next place, without suspecting the pagan soldiers of the Roman garrison of being susceptible of any feelings of mercy or delicacy in putting the sentence of death into execution, we are bound to give them credit for something like common sense. Now, the idea of a pretender to divine honours would have been just as intelligible to them as that of a pretender to the throne of the Kings of Israel or Judah—of ‘the Jews,’ as they would have understood it. They would-be ‘Son of God’ (that is to say, the Son of Jupiter or some other of their numerous deities) would therefore have been a famous butt for them. They would have worshipped him, have made him offerings, have asked him to deliver oracles—to ‘tell them their fortunes,’—and would have played off all sorts of practical jokes on him as a pretended divinity. But we do not read of anything of the sort. On the contrary, it was simply in the character of a mock sovereign,—a pretended ‘King of the Jews,’—that the rough Roman soldiery amused themselves with the condemned criminal on his way to execution, after he had been scourged with the terrible ‘flagellum,’ as a preliminary to his being attached to the cross. They ‘stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand (as a sceptre); and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews’‡. In fact, they treated him as a temporal sovereign. But there was not among these heathen soldiers a thought of attributing any supernatural powers to Jesus, by way of joke, as there had been

* Deut. xiii. 10.

† Acts vii. 58.

‡ Matth. xxvii. 28, 29.

among the Jewish attendants of the high priest, who, when they mocked him as a pseudo-Messiah, said, quite consistently, ‘Prophecy unto us, thou Messiah, who is he that smote thee?’ *

So, too, with the Inscription on the Cross, given in the three historical Gospels, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews,’—‘The King of the Jews,’—and ‘This is the King of the Jews’ †; which M. Renan looks upon as something painful and injurious to the nation, he being led to this idea by the statement in the fourth Gospel, that when this title, which was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin, was read by many of the Jews, the chief priests said to Pilate, ‘Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews’ ‡.

The answer which it is pretended Pilate returned to this representation is only a further proof of the apocryphal character of that ‘humiliating’ document. He is said to have replied, ‘What I have written I have written’ §. His true answer, if the priests had really made such a representation to him, would more naturally have been in the spirit of the declaration of his successor Festus to King Agrippa with reference to his sending the prisoner Paul to Rome:—‘It seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him’ ||. The Jews had accused Jesus of ‘perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself was the Anointed King’ ¶,—that is to say, he pretended to be the lawful sovereign of the Jewish nation, and was in consequence condemned to death; and the Roman governor simply ‘set over his head his accusation’ **.

The object of the writer of the fourth Gospel was to disconnect, as much as possible, the idea of ‘The Son of God’ from that of ‘The Messiah’ or Anointed King of Israel; which two terms were synonymous and convertible in the Jewish mind, but had totally different meanings in that of the Gentile Christian World. Hence he suppressed the very significant revilings of

* Matth. xxvi. 68.

† Matth. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; Luke xxiii. 38.

‡ John xix. 21.

§ John xix. 22.

|| Acts xxv. 27.

¶ Luke xxiii. 2.

** Matth. xxvii. 37.

the people when our Lord was on the Cross, which are recorded in the three historical Gospels in the following terms:—The first has, ‘If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. . . . If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him’*. The second Gospel has, ‘Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe’†. In the third Gospel it is, ‘He saved others; let him save himself, if he be the Messiah, the chosen of God. . . . If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself’‡.

The slight differences existing in these three separate statements must, according to the principles of true criticism, be admitted to establish the fact that Jesus, while suffering on the Cross, was reviled by both Jews and Romans as a pseudo-Messiah, or would-be King of the Jews; and also that the Inscription on the Cross, in like manner slightly varied but substantially identical in all three Gospels, expressed this as being the gravamen of the crime for which he suffered. As to M. Renan’s notion that Pilate intended to insult or mock the Jews by this inscription, it is purely imaginary. The Roman governor had not a particle of feeling on the subject; but merely intended to express in a few words the ‘accusation’ against the criminal in a plain, practical matter-of-fact form.

In addition to his misrepresentations and omissions in this respect, the writer of the fourth Gospel further falsifies the Inscription itself, by representing it as having been ‘Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews’§. So completely, however, has the idea prevailed that this extended form of the title is preferable to that of the other three Gospels, that the initials I. N. R. I. are shown in all paintings within and without the churches, on crucifixes, and in fact in every instance where the Crucifixion is represented or referred to. On the authority of the three historical Gospels the initials ought to be, at the most, I. R. I.—‘Iesus Rex Iudeorum.’

* Matth. xxvii. 40–42.

† Mark xv. 32.

‡ Luke xxiii. 35–37.

§ John xix. 19.

According to the first and second Gospels, the suffering Messiah, when on the Cross, uttered a loud cry of anguish and despair—‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’* Nothing could be more natural than such an exclamation; and as it is not at all likely that it would have been invented at a subsequent period, when the idea of the divine nature of Jesus had acquired a definite form, it must be accepted as having really been uttered by the sufferer. Subsequently, however, when the third Gospel was written, a ‘development’ of the history of the Crucifixion had taken place. The propriety of such an exclamation on the part of our Lord had become questionable; and therefore in this document Jesus is merely said to have ‘cried with a loud voice’†, without the words of the cry of despair being given. At the same time we find introduced before this loud cry the conversation with the penitent thief, which, though not mentioned in the fourth Gospel, is marvellously elaborated in the Apocryphal Gospels. And then, in the third Gospel, after Jesus had so cried with a loud voice, it is added that he said, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,’ and that having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

This development is, however, as nothing in comparison with that which we find in the fourth Gospel, not only in this respect, but likewise, and yet more so, as regards the persons who were with Jesus when he breathed his last. The importance of this subject requires that it should be discussed at some length.

In the first Gospel it is expressly said that, when Jesus was arrested, ‘all the disciples forsook him and fled’‡; and, with the exception of Peter’s denial of his Master, we find no further mention of any of them till after the Resurrection. But it is stated that, at the Crucifixion, ‘many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him; among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children’§. In the second Gospel, in like manner, it is recorded that the disciples ‘all

* Matth. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34.

† Luke xxiii. 46.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 56.

§ Matth. xxvii. 55, 56.

forsook him and fled' *; that Peter denied his master thrice; and that, at the Crucifixion, 'there were also women looking on afar off, among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome' †. In the third Gospel the denial by Peter is recorded, but not the disappearance of the disciples. On the contrary it is stated that, at the Crucifixion, 'All his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things' ‡.

Now, in these three different accounts there is at all events nothing inconsistent. The disciples of Jesus forsook him and fled, and yet they may have been among 'all his acquaintance' that 'stood afar off'; though the ominous silence of the first two Gospels in this respect would lead to the inference that the panic-stricken disciples had been really afraid to show themselves, and that the writer of the third Gospel deemed it expedient to commence their rehabilitation by thus putting in an appearance for them. But, however this may have been, all three narratives absolutely concur in declaring that whatever persons may have been present, they all 'stood afar off!' Hence it must be accepted as a positive fact that, at the time of our Lord's Passion, not a single one of his acquaintance was near him; certainly not any of his disciples; and most assuredly not his mother, of all persons in the world! Indeed, it stands to reason that the officials of the law, who in this case were a band of Roman soldiers, would not have allowed anyone, whether relatives of the three criminals or not, to approach very near to the place of execution.

In the fourth Gospel, however, everything is changed, with the exception of Peter's denial of his Master. There is no cry of despair on the Cross; none of resignation; no promise of Paradise to the repentant thief; no standing 'afar off.' Instead of this, there is the incredible statement that 'there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene' §,—let this only be tested by

* Mark xiv. 50.

† Luke xxiii. 49.

‡ Mark xv. 40.

§ John xix. 25.

supposing it to have occurred at the public execution of three criminals at the Old Bailey!—and that when Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved,—that is to say, the pretended writer of this fictitious narrative,—he saith unto his mother, ‘Woman, behold thy Son!’ and to John himself he said ‘Behold thy mother!’ And it is added that ‘from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home’*—soon to be taken up from thence to heaven as the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God!

The fourth Gospel then relates how Jesus, knowing that in his death and the accompanying circumstances everything was accomplished (*tēreλεσται*), excepting the prophecy of the Psalmist, ‘In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’†—the fulfilment of which was evidently so essential to the accomplishment of Jesus’s mission!—said ‘I thirst.’ And a vessel full of ‘posca,’ the sour wine and water drunk by the Roman soldiers, being there handy, they filled a sponge with it, and fastened it on a stalk of hyssop, and put it to his mouth; and when Jesus had received the ‘posca’ he said ‘Everything is now really accomplished’—*tēreλεσται*, the same word as before, not ‘It is finished,’ as it is wrongly translated in the Authorized English Version, leading to great mistakes on the part of expounders of the text,—and so ‘he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost’‡.

This same spurious document then goes on to give a series of details peculiarly its own. Its words are:—‘The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was a high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water’§.

* John xix. 26, 27.

† John xix. 28–30.

† Ps. lxix. 21.

§ John xix. 31–34.

These particulars have formed the subject of frequent comment, both adversely and with a view to the removal of the difficulties they present. All that will be remarked here is, that if the order for the ‘crurifragium’ was really given, it would have been carried out by the Roman soldiers as a matter of routine; and the neglect of its performance in the case of one of the criminals would have been a breach of military discipline, subjecting the offenders to condign punishment. Let the transaction be supposed to occur at the present day. Three criminals condemned to death are executed together. For some special reason it is desired to anticipate the usual time for the removal of their dead bodies; and therefore, in order to make sure of their death, the ‘coup de grâce’ is commanded to be given. Now it is inconceivable that the soldiers detailed for this duty,—a duty as simple, and assuredly not so repugnant to their feelings, as firing at a comrade of their own condemned to death by a court-martial, and then going up close to him, and blowing his brains out if the volley of the platoon should not have taken effect,—would have troubled themselves to ascertain whether the criminals they were ordered to put out of their misery were already dead or not*. And it is even more incredible that, in addition to this gross breach of discipline on the part of the whole band of soldiers, one of them should have dared to take upon himself to stick his spear into the side of one of the criminals, not to kill him (for it is circumstantially related that ‘he was dead already,’ or otherwise they must have broken his legs), but in order that from the dead body might ‘forthwith come there out blood and water’†; which, if it means anything at all, must mean the coagulum and serum, into which blood drawn from a *living* body separates after it has stood some time, but which never issue from a *corpse*!

* The *Times* newspaper of March 21st, 1872, when describing the execution of the Communist, Préau de Wedel, says:—‘His death must have been instantaneous, for the firing was so good that out of twelve bullets ten struck him, eight in the vital parts. Nevertheless, after the medical examination of the body, the usual *coup de grâce* was given, as a matter of form, by a soldier with one of the spare rifles.’

† John xix. 34.

We now see revealed the motive for bringing the beloved disciple to the foot of the Cross, in defiance of the concurrent testimony of the three historical Gospels that all stood afar off. ‘He that saw it bare record’—that is to say, this is the record of an eye-witness—‘and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe’*. And it may not unreasonably be concluded that this story of the breaking of the other criminals’ legs but sparing those of Jesus, and of piercing his dead body with a spear, was invented for the purpose of identifying the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross with that of the Paschal Lamb—the ‘Lamb of God’; and enabling the writer to say, ‘For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken †. And again, another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced’‡.

It is not in the least surprising that statements such as these should during ages have been believed by all Christendom, when in this intellectual nineteenth century a sceptic, who does not scruple to impute charlatanism and fraud to our Lord himself, stands forward nevertheless as the zealous advocate for the authenticity of this most false and misleading document. In the estimation of M. Renan the fourth Gospel contains precise information, such as could only have been imparted by an eye-witness. It is true that the French critic can hardly satisfy himself that the whole Gospel is from the pen of the aged Galilean fisherman; but he is still inclined to believe—in fact, he does believe, inasmuch as he adopts the fourth Gospel in accordance with his belief—that ‘John in his old age having read the Gospel narratives then in circulation, and having on the one hand noticed various inaccuracies, and being on the other hand vexed at seeing himself not made enough of in the history of Christ, took upon himself to dictate a number of things which he knew better than anyone else, in order to show that in many instances, where Peter alone was spoken of, he had figured with and before him. Already during Jesus’s lifetime slight feelings of jealousy had been manifested between the

* John xix. 35. † Exod. xii. 46. ‡ Zech. xii. 10; John xix. 36, 37.

sons of Zebedee and the other disciples : since the death of his brother James, John remained the sole heir of those intimate reminiscences whereof those two Apostles were confessedly the depositaries. Hence arose his constant care to remind his readers that he is the last survivor of the eye-witnesses, and the pleasure taken by him in narrating circumstances which he alone could know. Hence so many marks of precision, which seem as if they were the comments of an annotator :—“It was the sixth hour ;” “it was night ;” “the servant’s name was Malchus ;” “they had made a fire of coals, for it was cold ;” “the coat was without seam.” Hence that disorder in the composition, the want of connexion in the first chapters, features peculiar to this Gospel, which are inexplicable on the supposition that it is merely a theological discourse without historical value, but which, on the other hand, become perfectly intelligible, if, in accordance with tradition, it is looked on as the record of an old man’s reminiscences, sometimes of prodigious freshness, but sometimes having undergone strange modifications’*.

It is strange that the learned and ingenious French scholar should not have contemplated the possibility of this extraordinary document being a literary forgery altogether, and should not have detected in the minute details which he regards so favourably, evidence of that desire on the part of the writer to make his case appear true, which so often leads a false witness to overshoot the mark and prove too much. For example, it is very unlikely that, at Jerusalem, in the beginning of the month of April, it was necessary to have a ‘fire of coals’ in the hall of the high priest’s palace on account of the cold ; it is yet more unlikely that under the bright light of the Paschal full-moon the myrmidons of the high priests should have brought lanterns and torches to look for Jesus ; and it is most unlikely of all that the writer of this document, who professes to be a Jew, should invariably speak of his countrymen and co-religionists as ‘the Jews.’ There is a story that King Charles the Second asked the Fellows of a certain learned Society to tell him why a fish when alive took up

* ‘Vie de Jésus,’ xxv-xxix.

less room in a vessel of water than when it was dead ; and that this question quite posed the philosophers, till one of them—probably the least learned of the company—suggested the expediency of ascertaining whether it was really a fact ; when it was found that the Merry Monarch had been playing them a trick. There is nothing waggish in the trick which the writer of the fourth Gospel has played on Christendom, by putting that document into circulation as the production of the apostle John, an eye-witness of all he related : on the contrary, it must, unhappily, be regarded as the most deliberate and systematic of all the ‘pious frauds’ that the Clergy of the Christian Congregation—it is a prostitution of terms to call that Clergy the ‘Church’—ever perpetrated on the ignorant and credulous Laity, for what is impiously called ‘the greater Glory of God.’ Before M. Renan ventured to conceive so monstrous an idea as that the pure-minded Jesus could, under any circumstances, have been a party, or even in the remotest degree privy, to ‘a great miracle, which should strike forcibly on the incredulity of the people of Jerusalem’*, by the pretended raising of Lazarus from the dead (on which subject it is sufficient to refer to what has been said in a previous Chapter †), he would have done well to have first contemplated the possibility that the alleged event which gave rise to so injurious a supposition might itself be a fiction.

After the death of Jesus on the Cross, Joseph, a native of Arimathea, who was a member of the Sanhedrin, but not consenting to Jesus’s death, because he believed him to be the Messiah, came and asked Pilate for his Lord’s body, which he buried in a sepulchre hewn in the neighbouring rock‡. All four Gospels agree in this ; besides which Joseph is so mixed up in all the Apocryphal Gospels and other writings of the earliest ages, that his existence and interference in the way described must be regarded as an historical fact.

The writer of the fourth Gospel cannot, however, be satisfied

* ‘Vie de Jésus,’ p. 359.

† Chapter XV. pages 181, 182.

‡ Matth. xxvii. 57-60 ; Mark xv. 42-46 ; Luke xix. 50-53 ; John xix. 38-42.

with a plain matter of fact. To throw dust in the eyes of believers—and unbelievers too—by pretending that he possessed special and exclusive means of information, he brings on to the stage as a companion of Joseph, the ‘man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews,’ who had already been introduced into an earlier portion of the same document, for the purpose of enabling Jesus to speak, not as he is shown in the genuine records to have spoken, but rather as a Gnostic of the second century, when Christianity had become gentilized*. With that minute precision, which has so captivated M. Renan, but which would cause more serious thinkers to suspect trickery, Nicodemus is described as bringing with him a ‘mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds’ weight’; and then he and Joseph are said to have taken ‘the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury’†, and so laid it in the sepulchre.

These details do not agree with those mentioned in the other three Gospels, which also differ among themselves. This is, however, of no real consequence, inasmuch as all concur as to the material fact of the burial of the body of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea, and not by any of our Lord’s own immediate disciples. And this is only reasonable and natural, because they were Galileans, strangers in Jerusalem, and besides had fled panic-stricken on his arrest; so that, if some one residing in Jerusalem had not interfered as Joseph did, the body of Jesus must have remained on the Cross, after the usual custom of the Romans.

That our Lord should have been so entirely deserted by his followers is one of the most remarkable facts of his history, as serving to prove the peculiar character of his mission. Had he been merely the founder of a new school of morality or even of a new religious sect, the feelings of his disciples would, must, have been similar to those of the members of any such secular society or religious congregation, when suddenly deprived of their head. However much these might love, respect, or even venerate

* John iii. 1-21.

† John xix. 39-42.

their teacher or pastor on account of his moral worth and eminent personal qualities, however much they might admire his talent and eloquence, their hearts would, first and above all, be filled with grief and anguish at the loss of him individually. With these feelings would naturally come to be associated regret on account of the void in the chair or the pulpit which had been so ably filled by him ; still grief for their personal loss would be the predominant feeling.

So was it not at all the case with Jesus and his disciples. Of the twelve persons chosen by him to be his immediate companions and helpers, how many of them were really attached to his person ? Not a single one ! Peter was anxious to know what reward he should obtain for his services ; James and John thought most of securing beforehand the best places in his kingdom, to the great indignation and jealousy of their companions ; and Judas betrayed his master. When Jesus was arrested, all the disciples forsook him and fled ; and though Peter ‘followed him afar off unto the high-priest’s palace, and went in and sat with the servants,’ it was more out of curiosity—‘to see the end,’ as it is written—than from any real sympathy ; for no sooner was he charged with having been with Jesus than he denied it with an oath, saying ‘I do not know the man’*. And at the supreme moment, when their Lord was put to death as a malefactor, though ‘all the people that came together to see that sight,’—as any mob at the present day would collect to see a man hanged,—on ‘beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned’† when it was all over ; yet the disciples themselves seemed not to have mingled with the crowd, if, indeed, they were present at all, which (as has already been shown ‡) is very doubtful.

Even after the Resurrection, when two of the disciples were accosted by Jesus on their way to Emmaus, as they talked together of all these things which had happened ‘and were sad,’ their sadness was not caused by any personal regard for Jesus,—by the loss of a beloved master, companion, friend, or teacher,—

* Math. xxvi. 58-72. † Luke xxiii. 48. ‡ See above, page 252.

but by their disappointment at not finding him to be the Messiah they had calculated on his being. ‘We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel’*, was the predominant thought in their minds, which quite absorbed and annihilated all feelings of personal regret; and when afterwards the true nature of the Messiah’s mission was revealed to his disciples generally, it was still not the man Jesus who became the object of their love and veneration, who was so eloquently preached by Paul and the other Apostles, but it was the suffering Messiah, the crucified ‘Christ.’

It is therefore manifest how entirely wrong those are who look on Jesus merely as a pastor or teacher. A striking parallel is afforded by the political occurrences in France during the last few months. Previously to the declaration of war against Germany, no ruler could well have been more popular than was the Emperor Napoleon. All looked up to him; all courted his favour; all were devoted to his service; all sought the good things he had at his disposal. His dynasty had just been established on what was regarded, and properly regarded, as the almost unanimous voice of the French nation. The war was likewise most popular: the national cry was ‘à Berlin.’ Had the arms of France been triumphant, Napoleon might almost have declared himself a god! His doing so would hardly have met with so much opposition among his vassals as the Pope’s declaration of his infallibility has raised among Catholics. Sedan came, and instantly ‘all forsook him and fled.’ The heads of the French nation solemnly disowned their sovereign, to whom they had sworn allegiance,—unhesitatingly perjuring themselves, as Peter the chief of the Apostles did. Since then, through all the troubles of the nation, scarcely a voice has been raised in favour of the man whom, but a short time ago, it was the fashion to call the Saviour of France! And those few partisans he may still have are far more those of the Emperor Napoleon the Third than of the man Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. He has not shown himself to be that Saviour and Regenerator of France that he

* Luke xxiv. 21.

was believed to be: what do his countrymen care for him individually?

So was it with Jesus the Messiah—the Anointed King of Israel! It was not till after the true nature and character of his Kingdom had become manifest to his hesitating, and perhaps more than hesitating, disciples, that they returned to their allegiance to their sovereign. And the fact that they did so is of so peculiar a character, that, except on the assumption of the Divine nature of our Lord's mission, it is utterly inexplicable. In every other instance of an unsuccessful political or religious movement,—and the mission of Jesus must, to all outward appearances, be placed in this category,—the death of its originator and leader has been followed, not only by the dispersion of his followers, or such of them as may not have shared his fate in the field of battle or on the scaffold, but by the speedy, if not immediate, extinction of his sect or party. In the instance of our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, his death served but to increase the faith of his disciples, and (as it were) to give to their zeal the impulse requisite for securing the triumph of his cause. As this never was the case with any human enterprise, the inevitable conclusion is that our Lord was truly the Messiah of prophesy, the Son of God; and that, with the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, he adopted precisely that course which alone was suited and fitted to carry out the decree of his Father who is in heaven.

Had Jesus endeavoured to drive out the Roman armies as the pseudo-Messiah, Bar Cocaba, did, or had he so much as thought of organizing his followers for the purpose of aggression or defence, his cause might have enjoyed a momentary success, only to terminate in an ignominious and complete failure. If even he had made the slightest effort to turn the enthusiasm of his adherents to account at the last moment, he could not have failed to excite the fears of the Roman governor, and to provoke the hostility of the Jewish hierarchy against them likewise; and thus, after his Crucifixion, they too would have been subjected to persecution, instead of being allowed to remain in comparative

peace and safety in their seeming obscurity, unharmed and, for a time, unheeded. Instead of which his sole aim was to restrain the exuberance of their zeal. When he was arrested by the agents of the high priest and elders, one of the disciples drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear; and had not Jesus immediately interfered, a broil would doubtless have ensued. But he gently said unto his too zealous partisan, ‘Put up again thy sword into its place ; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.’ And then, recalling to mind his own previous temptation in the wilderness, he continued, ‘Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?’* And thus it was, and we are witnesses of its fruits unto this day. By no other means, we may be assured, could the Messiah’s Kingdom upon earth have been established, and have extended itself as it has done and it is still continuing to do. Verily, ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Eternal. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’†.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE MESSIAH.

In a sermon preached during the Church Congress at Southampton on October 16th 1870, the Bishop of Winchester is reported to have said :—‘What is the great fact that shapes the whole mission of Christ’s Church on earth ? It is that she is witness to the fact of the resurrection ; before all other things she is sent out to tell the world that Jesus rose from the dead. The disciples and apostles were witnesses of that resurrection. Christ’s

* Matth. xxvi. 51-54.

† Isa. lv. 8, 9.

ministers have much else to say, but they must say this first, because on this fact the existence and purpose of the Church rest. If this be not a fact, both her preaching and her mission are in vain. The Church, then, is witness to the historical fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. In the next place that historical fact is a miracle. It is impossible to say that it is nothing but a myth handed down from remote antiquity, or a clothing of philosophical ideas in a garb of fact. This story is the story of a miracle, or it is a lie; and from this dilemma there is no escape. It is on this point that the Church comes into immediate collision with so-called science, because she brings the supernatural into the field of the natural, of which science claims to be the sole exponent and interpreter. Science says that miracles are impossible; but the whole existence and life [of the Church] is bound up with its assertion of the miraculous. Nothing can be more pitiful and foolish than the attempts, so common nowadays, to explain away the miracles of Scripture, or to pare them down to almost nothing—saying that this or that is not so very miraculous or so utterly supernatural. What can be gained by this, since, after all, the fact must be faced that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? It is a pitiful thing to see men who are charged with the Church's mission proclaiming the fact timidly, bargaining, as it were, for this last fragment as a little miracle, so as to make it as little offensive as possible to scientific vision—saying, with one of old, “in this thing pardon thy servant.”

Dr. Wilberforce, after his able fashion, has here seized the whole question in his vigorous grasp, and laid it bare. Among those who profess to be believers, there cannot be any half belief on this vital point. By continuing, as they do, to dally with the question, they justify their opponents in saying that they are unable to defend the cause they profess to advocate, and only prevented by shame—if not by some more unworthy motive—from giving it up altogether. Our Lord himself has said, ‘He that is not with me is against me’*. Let such persons then be honest, at all events, and openly avow their convictions.

* Matth. xii. 30.

The good Bishop may not have expressed himself altogether in strictly correct language; but that does not much signify. What he means is quite intelligible to the minds of all; and, what is more, it is perfectly true. The Resurrection of the Messiah is a fact on which the whole Christian Dispensation depends. The Apostle Paul says, in unequivocal language, ‘If the Messiah be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up the Messiah’*.

It is then with this fact, thus certified, that we have now to deal; and in our consideration of this fact the first point to be raised is, that, though it is the bounden duty of every Christian not only to believe inwardly, but to confess openly the fact itself, it does not at all follow that he is bound to accept the interpretation put upon that fact by the ‘Church’—that is to say by the priesthood. In order to know whether their interpretation is the true one, it is essential that the believer should investigate the evidence upon which the fact itself professes to be established. Now, all the evidence that we possess respecting our Lord’s resurrection from the dead is contained in the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul. As regards the three historical Gospels the ‘humiliating’ admission of Archbishop Thomson, already noticed†, deprives them of that value which attaches to the testimony of witnesses of the first order, namely, such as are eye-witnesses of the actual fact they desire to prove. By this it is far from being intended that the testimony of the Evangelists should be rejected as of no value. All that is meant is that they must be passed over in the first instance, and only called on for corroborative evidence. As a matter of course, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles comes within the same category. The testimony of the fourth Gospel will unhappily have to be adduced, only to establish beyond all doubt, that, in this instance also, that document is not an authentic and veracious record of the circumstances attending the fact. Thus it becomes valueless as direct evidence; but at the same

* 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15.

† See Chapter III. page 34.

time its unscrupulous endeavour to give to that fact a false interpretation must be regarded as strong circumstantial evidence of the truth of the fact itself. There remains therefore only the evidence of the Apostle Paul, as given in certain Epistles or Letters, especially those to the Romans, the Corinthians (two), and the Galatians, the genuineness of which is now admitted by the most adverse critics*.

Who and what Paul was has already been explained in a former Chapter†. It has here to be added that from having been a determined persecutor of the infant Congregation ('Church'), he suddenly became, within a few years after the Crucifixion of our Lord, a believer in him as the Messiah. The cause of this change the Apostle solemnly declares to have been the Lord's appearance to him‡; and thenceforth he was the most zealous assertor of his crucified Lord's Resurrection, on which fact, mainly if not entirely, he based the Mission to which he dedicated the remainder of his life.

Now Paul's personal evidence of the Messiah's Resurrection is thus expressly affirmed in his First Epistle to the Corinthians:— 'Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that the Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Congregation of God'§.

Here it is distinctly and unequivocally asserted as a fact that

* See above, Chapter III. page 28.

† Chapter II. page 21.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 8; Acts xxii. 6–11, xxvi. 12–18.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 1–9.

the Messiah, after his Resurrection, was seen by numerous persons, and ‘last of all,’ says the Apostle, ‘he was seen of me also.’ To an assertion like this the first and readiest objection will be, that Paul, like many other pious and enthusiastic men (such as Emanuel Swedenborg and Colonel Gardiner, for instance), was labouring under an hallucination; so that, although conscientiously believing what was merely the imagination of a diseased mind, and honestly and truly expressing his conviction of the Lord’s appearance to him personally as an absolute fact, he was in reality giving utterance to a figment of his own distempered brain. It is thus that a recent writer, when describing Paul’s character, says, ‘That he was truthful, sagacious, far-seeing, with a clear practical sense and a profound moral insight, appears undoubted; but these qualities are often found in actual life to be associated in the same individual with the readiest credulity upon all matters that fall in with his preconceptions.’ And he instances Luther, who ‘believed in the actual bodily temptation of the devil’; John Wesley, who ‘believed in omens, ghosts, and witches’; and ‘a modern professor who is understood to believe that he has seen a man floating in the air without material support, though in a very dim light’*. But it must be replied that, in the instances thus adduced, the belief preceded and led to the ‘preconceptions’ respecting the particular fact; whereas, in the case of Paul, his preconceptions were altogether adverse to the belief in Jesus as the Messiah; so that this man, endowed with all the high faculties attributed to him in the passage cited above, is just such a one as was not likely to have changed his opinion so completely as he did without some strong exciting external cause, such as that which he declares did actually operate upon him, and thus decided his future destiny.

But even if the validity of the foregoing objection be conceded, what is to be said of Paul’s appeal to the testimony of others? Was the ground of this appeal imaginary likewise? Were there no such witnesses? The Apostle’s reply to the Roman governor at Cæsarea is deserving of most serious consideration on the part of the really impartial searcher after truth:—‘I am not mad,

* Sir Richard Norton, ‘The Jesus of History.’

most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king, before whom also I speak freely, knoweth all these things: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner' *.

The Apostle here openly asserts the Resurrection of the Messiah, which had occurred barely thirty years previously, to be a notorious fact; and he makes this unqualified assertion in the public judgment-hall of the Roman governor of Judæa, in the presence of the Jewish King, Herod Agrippa, and his wife Bernice, who had come thither with great pomp †,—which means, of course, accompanied by numerous Jewish attendants,—and in the presence of the chief captains and principal men of the city, both Jews and Gentiles; among whom there must have been many, including the Jewish king before whom he stood, to whom the Resurrection of Jesus was known, if not as a fact, at all events by report. So that, even supposing the report had not previously reached the ears of Agrippa himself, some of the bystanders would have been able to certify that Paul was no impostor, even though they might at the same time have expressed their disbelief in Jesus as the Messiah. And it is most significant that Festus, when explaining Paul's cause to Agrippa, is described as saying that his accusers 'had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive' ‡; as if the matter were one that was perfectly well understood.

Taking into consideration the sterling character of the Apostle, of which there can be no doubt, it would be preposterous to entertain the idea that the whole affair was an impudent imposture from beginning to end, that Paul was a despicable charlatan, an actor playing a part, an advocate suborned to support a claim which he knew to be false and fraudulent. Or, supposing it possible for him to have been all this, he would most assuredly have been denounced and exposed on the spot. Instead of which, the Jewish prince expressed himself in open court as being not altogether disinclined to believe in the Apostle's

* Acts xxvi. 25, 26.

† Acts xxv. 23.

‡ Acts xxv. 19.

declaration * ; and concurred in opinion with the Roman governor that the prisoner had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, but that he might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar†.

From Paul's public declaration that 'the thing was not done in a corner;' from his appeal to the king himself, as knowing the existence of the rumour, even if not assenting to the truth of the fact; from Agrippa's avowal of the reasonableness of the prisoner's belief,—to say the least of the answer he made to Paul; and from the conclusion to which the king and the governor came together, there is no room to doubt the fact that Paul was perfectly sane, and that he did not speak as he did without sufficient warrant. For it must be borne in mind that he made his assertion, not merely on the evidence of his own senses, but on the testimony of numerous other witnesses.

Confining ourselves always to Paul's evidence, the next portion of that evidence to be noticed is his statement respecting the numerous other persons by whom our Lord had been seen. On this point Dr. Strauss, after having summarily set aside Paul's own testimony on the ground of his self-deception, says that the Apostle, in deriving his information from the lips of eye-witnesses, does not lead us beyond the fact that those eye-witnesses firmly believed they had seen Jesus restored to life. Be it so. If, in the ordinary circumstances of life, a number of persons—the Apostle says 'above five hundred'—were to assert their belief (which, in a case like this, would mean their positive conviction) that they had actually seen in life a certain individual who was alleged to be dead, the world would be bound to accept their testimony as to the truth of the fact asserted. It is quite possible for all these witnesses, however numerous, to have been mistaken as to the identity of such individual: but that they actually saw someone, whom they firmly believed to be him, is all that we have to do with at the present moment; and as to the truth of this fact, their testimony must be accepted as conclusive.

Of course the evidence of others thus adduced by Paul has not,

* See above, Chapter V. page 64.

† Acts xxvi. 31, 32.

'*prima facie*,' the same value as that of the Apostle individually; but it being, as it is, appealed to by him in corroboration of his own personal experience, and this, too, openly and before the world as a matter of notoriety, such evidence cannot but be most important. In fact, in our modern courts of law, such evidence of public rumour and the like, 'though composed of the speech of third parties not under oath, is original evidence, and not hearsay, the immediate subject of inquiry being the concurrence of many voices, which raises a presumption that the fact in which they concur is true' *.

But it is further objected by Dr. Strauss that Paul does not tell us how these witnesses arrived at their belief, and what reason they had for regarding the appearance of Jesus as something real, and, indeed, for believing the person they saw to be their Master. The answer to this is that Paul expressly declares that Jesus was 'seen' by the persons named by him; and if so, those persons must either have really seen Jesus himself or else an impostor. If it was really Jesus, it does not signify whether the appearance was spiritual, as it was to Paul himself, or in the flesh, as it is said to have been in the Gospels. In any case it must have been an objective or external appearance of somebody or something; for it is inconceivable that any hallucination, any mere stretch of the imagination, or, indeed, any trickery on the part of others, could have made any considerable number of persons concur in declaring they had seen Jesus, or someone they believed to be Jesus, unless there had been some substantive ground for such declaration.

It would be quite within the range of possibility for the disciples, however numerous, to have been deceived by a pretender, such as Perkin Warbeck, or the now deceased John Sobieski Stuart. Indeed, there is nothing unreasonable in the supposition that someone might actually have represented himself to them as their crucified Master risen from the dead, as he had predicted he would do; and in such a case it cannot be denied that the fact of his having been believed to be Jesus, even by

* Phillips 'On Evidence.'

'above five hundred brethren at once,' would of itself be no stronger proof of his identity than his being recognized by a much smaller number of persons. On this point the opinion expressed by the Attorney-General in his address to the jury on the celebrated Tichborne trial is especially opportune. Speaking of the numerous persons who had been induced to avow their belief that the claimant was really the true Sir Roger Tichborne, Sir John D. Coleridge is reported to have said:—' But is this the sort of evidence on which a man is to succeed to an estate ? It is really childish ; but yet it is the sort of thing to which these persons fall victims, and the sort of thing, remember, on which the learned and astute people outside say, "There is an overwhelming case on behalf of the plaintiff—it cannot be upset." I need not remind you that if there are 500 people who fall dupes to one and the same piece of charlatanism, the evidence is not the evidence of 500 people, but the evidence of one. You do not make the evidence a bit stronger because you multiply it by the number of dupes. If you bring them over individually by separate chains of reasoning, then, I grant, you have something stronger ; but it is a mere fallacy and delusion to suppose that you strengthen your evidence by the testimony of 500 dupes. People who do not estimate evidence properly, do not seem to bear that in mind. They should bring to the consideration of this case the principles of common sense, and should inquire, "What is the worth of this piece of evidence ? How has it been built up ? Will the structure stand the test of common sense ?" And then, a suggestion having been made to him by one of the counsel on the same side, the Attorney-General added:—' My learned friend refers to the analogy of the tricks of M. Houdin, or the Wizard of the North, and remarks that the conclusion would be just as ill founded.'

But even if we assume that all the persons referred to by Paul as witnesses of the fact of their Lord's appearance to them were the dupes of some impostor, the question then arises what became of that impostor afterwards ? If he had put himself at the head of a political party, it could only have been as an

antagonist to Rome, in which case he would soon have been defeated and slain, as Judah of Gamala had been a short time previously, and as Bar Cocaba was in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. Or if he had resumed the religious mission of Jesus, he would, as a matter of course, have gathered about him his former disciples. In either case there could not have failed to be some mention of him either in Profane or in Scripture History. But there is nothing of the sort ; and therefore, in the absence of all evidence on the subject, we have no warrant for assuming or even imagining the existence of any such representative of Jesus, but, on the contrary, are bound to admit that the person whom the witnesses said they saw was Jesus himself.

As to the idea that the disciples themselves could knowingly and intentionally have put forward any such impostor, it is simply an absurdity ; because, in addition to the absence of all evidence of anything of the sort, and to the difficulty in the way of disposing of such impostor afterwards, it would be necessary to impute the grossest fraud, not only to all those disciples, but to Paul likewise. And Paul, with all his zeal and enthusiasm, was a clear-headed, practical man, of plain common sense, and a perfect man of the world ; and though his prudence and conciliatory disposition rendered him willing to become ‘all things to all men,’ still these never led him to submit to anything he knew or believed to be untrue, dishonest, or of equivocal character, or even to countenance it ; as witness his dispute with Peter at Antioch. He was, therefore, one of the most unlikely persons in the world to participate in any such plot for imposing upon others, or to be imposed on himself. And what is entirely in accordance with this argument, and in truth the most striking and, it may be said, the most convincing feature of Paul’s evidence, is, that, whilst incessantly appealing to the Messiah’s Resurrection from the dead, he does not think of proving or defending it, but assumes it as an established and well-known fact, with respect to which there was not, and could not be, any room for doubt. The thought of its being questioned by anyone seems, indeed, to have never entered the Apostle’s mind.

But, apart from this testimony of the Apostle Paul, both direct as regards himself and indirect as regards others, we have that of the writers of the four Gospels and of the Acts ; and though they cannot be adduced as having themselves been witnesses of the fact, their evidence is certainly not to be regarded as of no value. They must, under any circumstances, be accepted as bearing testimony to the notoriety of the occurrence. And the fact that their several accounts of that occurrence differ not only among themselves in various details, but also (as will next have to be shown) from that of Paul himself in a most important particular, ought to be regarded as the most convincing proof of the absence of collusion among them, and of their being independent witnesses of the reality of the main fact itself, whatever colour they may, any of them, have been induced by subsequent events to give to that fact.

If this be conceded (and there does not appear to be any legitimate or even plausible reason for disputing it), then all that is contended for is gained. The Resurrection of the Messiah from the dead is an historical fact. It may not be possible to explain how this fact occurred ; but even if that be the case, it is really more easy to believe in the reality of the alleged fact than to imagine that all those persons, including Paul himself, should either have been so egregiously deceived, or else should have combined to originate such a palpable fiction, and also that they should have succeeded in palming it off upon the world. This would indeed be a greater miracle than the occurrence itself. That the simple fact of the Messiah's Resurrection from the dead should ere long have been developed into something very different from what it really was, and what it was originally asserted and intended to be, is only in accordance with the treatment to which, owing to the infirmity of human nature, the other incidents of our Lord's history have been subjected. Errors and misrepresentations have hidden the truth, as clouds obscure the light of the sun ; but in like manner as the clouds pass over, and the orb of day shines forth with its wonted splendour, so will it be with the Light of the World, when the mists of dogmatism

and superstition, in which it has so long been enveloped, shall be dissipated and dispersed.

And this brings us to the momentous question,—What was the nature and character of the Resurrection of the Messiah from the dead? To this the answer will naturally be, that, according to the narrative of the four Gospels, the soul, spirit, or ‘ghost,’ which left Jesus’s body on the Cross, returned into it whilst it lay in the grave; and that his body, thus revivified, rose again on the third day, left the tomb, appeared to various persons, ate with them, was touched by some so as to convince them that it was really his own natural body, and ascended corporeally into heaven. And, as Paul testified before Festus and Agrippa that Moses and the prophets had said that the Messiah should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead*; so the Universal Church declares its belief in ‘the Resurrection of the Body,’ as it is expressed in what is called, and vulgarly believed to be, ‘The Apostles’ Creed,’ though this, like that ‘incomprehensible dogma folded up in unintelligible words’ †, ‘commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius,’ is well known to be the composition of a much later date than its name denotes.

Of late years, however, as Bishop Wilberforce laments, there has arisen much doubt on the subject of our Lord’s Resurrection, and many attempts have been made to invalidate the fact; though this it appears impossible to do, certified as the fact is by the Apostle Paul and others. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that Paul is the only witness of whom we possess the direct personal testimony, and who, therefore, is the only one whose evidence is really to be relied on. And such being the case, the question that now presents itself for consideration is, whether the evidence of that Apostle was given and intended by him in the sense in which it is generally understood, owing to the dogmatical interpretation that has been put upon it by the Priesthood.

Now Paul’s evidence is not at all confined to the simple fact

* *Acts xxvi. 23.*

† Duke of Somerset, ‘Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism,’ p. 153.

of the Messiah's Resurrection from the dead : in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle describes the nature and character of that occurrence. His words, which must be specially noted, are :—‘ But someone will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die ; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh ; but there is one flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial ; but the glory of the celestial is one, and that of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthly : the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly ; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery ; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have

put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus the Messiah' *.

Before proceeding to comment on this most remarkable declaration of the Apostle, it is necessary to notice an objection made to it by Professor Huxley, in his Address as President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, at the Liverpool Meeting in September 1870. His words are:—‘The axiom of ancient science, “that the corruption of one thing is the birth of another,” had its popular embodiment in the notion that a seed dies before the young plant springs from it; a belief so widespread and so fixed, that Saint Paul appeals to it in one of the most splendid outbursts of his fervid eloquence:—“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.” (1 Corinthians, xv. 36.) The proposition that life may, and does, proceed from that which has no life, then, was held alike by the philosophers, the poets, and the people, of the most enlightened nations, eighteen hundred years ago; and it remained the accepted doctrine of learned and unlearned Europe, through the Middle Ages, down even to the seventeenth century.’

To this it must be replied that the Apostle, in expressing himself as he did, was not so unphilosophical as he is thus made to appear. He employed the common form of speech, and so far, doubtless, he may be understood as having asserted what scientifically is not true. But in a practical sense, to the understanding of the unscientific world, the seed itself becomes corrupted, and (so to say) dies, though the germ of life within it remains, and gives being to the new form of existence of the plant that springs from its corruption and death. This is a very different thing from the vulgar error first successfully combated and shown to be fallacious two centuries ago by the truly great philosopher Francesco Redi, ‘a man of the widest knowledge and most

* 1 Cor. xv. 35-57.

versatile abilities, distinguished alike as scholar, poet, physician, and naturalist ;' namely, that the ' low forms of life were generated in the matters in which they made their appearance '—the doctrine, in fact, of ' spontaneous generation,' with which St. Paul's argument has nothing in common.

Speaking practically and quite unscientifically, the Apostle's exposition of the resurrection from the dead appears to be this : that the corruptible human body itself, when consigned to the earth, becomes corrupted and dies, but the living principle, the soul, the spirit, the ' ghost ' survives ; and that this, disengaged from the corruptible or ' natural ' body, is raised an incorruptible or ' spiritual ' body. That there may be no misunderstanding as to his meaning that the ' natural ' body is not raised from the dead, he emphatically declares that ' flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' The Apostle likewise declares explicitly that ' the Messiah is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept ;' and as the whole of his argument is founded on the identity of the resurrection of mankind generally with that of Jesus himself, the conclusion is inevitable that it was not the corruptible and natural body of our Lord that was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, but his incorruptible and spiritual body. And from this the further inference is, that it was in this incorruptible and spiritual body alone that the Messiah appeared to and was seen by Paul.

On the precise nature of this spiritual body of Jesus it is not intended to speculate here. The expression used by the Apostle is not in the least degree to be understood as a scientific definition ; and therefore, if theologians attempt to settle its meaning dogmatically, they will only be guilty of absurdities similar to those they have committed in most of their other definitions. They had better leave this portion of the work to men of science, who deal with things more than with words. Or, if the two would but unite, and religion become scientific and science religious, the union would be true philosophy, or Wisdom itself. All that can assuredly be affirmed is, that the Messiah's appearance to his great Apostle was not a subjective one, that is to say, an

idea conceived in the mind of the beholder ; but it was objective, or self-existing independently of the beholder.

But then there follows a most serious deduction from another declaration of the Apostle, whose words must be repeated here on account of their importance :—‘ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that the Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures ; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve ; after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once ; after that he was seen of James ; then of all the Apostles ; and last of all he was seen of me also’*. And taking these words in their simply natural sense, it is manifest that the Apostle, in thus speaking of the appearance of the Messiah to others as well as to himself, must be understood to mean that that appearance occurred in like manner and form to them all : that is to say, he did not appear spiritually to Paul himself and corporeally to those others ; but that, on every occasion mentioned, that appearance was of the same spiritual and incorporeal nature and character as it was to the Apostle himself ; or, to express it more definitely, the corruptible or ‘ natural ’ body of the Messiah remained altogether in the grave where it had been buried, and the incorruptible or ‘ spiritual ’ body alone was raised from the dead and appeared to all the disciples, Paul included.

This interpretation of the text may be expected, in the first instance, to give satisfaction neither to supernaturalists nor to naturalists—using the two terms in the vulgarest sense. For it disputes the priestly dogma of the Resurrection of the body, and yet does not do away with our Lord’s appearance after death.

The scruples of the latter class of objectors have first to be appeased. Now every candid and impartial lover of science for its own sake must admit that it is unphilosophical to declare dogmatically that the spiritual Resurrection from the dead is physically impossible, that is to say, against nature ! The most

* 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.

materialistic among them may not care to notice the existence of a soul or spirit apart from the body, but they cannot prove its non-existence. And because this separate existence is inexplicable by them, it does not afford any warrant for their positive denial of it. The arguments employed in the fourteenth Chapter of the present work, on 'The Miracles of Jesus'*, are quite applicable here; and therefore, in referring to what is there said, it will be sufficient to ask:—Why may not the Resurrection from the dead, however inexplicable it may be in the present state of our knowledge, be the effect of a law of nature, quite as miraculous as is the coming into existence of the individual living being?

But, on the other hand, it will be vehemently asserted that in the Gospels we have the positive declaration, in the most explicit terms, that 'Jesus rose in the body,' and that this has been in all ages the belief of the Universal Church—*'quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus, creditum est.'* To this the answer must unavoidably be that this declaration is the result of a 'pious fraud,' which goes back to a time anterior to the composition of those Gospels; or it should rather be said anterior to the composition of the latter portions of them, which contain the meagre and very unsatisfactory accounts of our Lord's Resurrection; for it is manifest that such could not have been the belief of the first disciples and the Apostle Paul, if his express words, already commented on, are to be read and understood in a natural sense. How they should have been interpreted as they have been, is a problem that may at first sight seem to be insoluble; and yet, by an appeal to the ordinary workings of the human mind, a solution can be found, which is perfectly intelligible and reasonable, as well as consistent with the rest of the Gospel history.

To the Jewish disciples of Jesus, as members of a nation believing in a constant communication between the Creator and his creatures through the medium of the spiritual world, whose whole history is based on such communication, and to whom therefore what is vulgarly called supernatural is simply natural, the

* Pages 170-178.

spiritual Resurrection of the Messiah, as it actually occurred, and as it is veraciously recorded by their enlightened co-religionist, the Pharisee Paul, better known to them by his Israelitish name Saul, would have been perfectly intelligible. The Jewish nation, or at all events the larger number of the people, expected the spiritual appearance of the Messiah on earth: their descendants at the present day continue to expect it. Consequently, his appearance to Paul, in the way described, would have been regarded by them as a physical fact, as much within the laws of nature as is the rising of the sun in the morning.

But to the Gentile converts to the belief in Jesus as the Messiah, who soon outnumbered the Jewish believers, this spiritual and incorporeal reappearance of the God 'Christos,' as they soon learned to call him, could not but have been eminently unsatisfactory. They had been brought up in the belief of the corporeal presence of their deities on earth, of their assuming the form of mortal men, and of their communicating in that form and character with mortals. In Hades, too, the ghosts of the dead were something more than disembodied spirits. They retained their bodily senses and human passions; they bore on their bodies the marks of the wounds that had caused their death; and in the *Odyssey* we find them crowding to drink the blood of the sacrifices of Tiresias, which, like an elixir of life, seemed to reanimate them, and give them speech and utterance; and when, after death, they revisited the earth, they did so in a bodily form, as (to cite a most familiar instance) Pluto was induced by Orpheus to allow Eurydice to do.

A curious description of the resuscitation of a dead body according to Gentile notions, is given by the Roman poet Lucan, the nephew of the philosopher Seneca, and a contemporary of St. Paul. It is in his '*Pharsalia*,' where he relates the visit of Sextus Pompeius to the witch Erichtho, with a view to ascertain his father's fate. For this purpose she had to reanimate a corpse, which the poet describes her as doing after the following fashion :—

'When she a carcase fitting had espied,
 A hook she fastened in his throat, and tied
 To it a fatal rope, by which the hag
 O'er rocks and stones did that poor carcase drag
 That must revive
 Then with warm blood, opening fresh wounds she fills
 His breast, and gore to th' inward parts distils.'

Eriacho next adjures the Furies and Stygian deities, and—

'Then lifting up her foaming mouth and head
 She saw hard by the ghost of that dead man
 Trembling to enter his old goal again,
 Fearing those cold pale members, and into
 That wounded breast and entrails torn to go.'

The witch's reiterated conjurations having at length forced the spirit to re-enter the body:—

'Then straight the clotted blood grows warm again,
 Feeds the black wounds, and runs through every vein
 And th' outward parts; the vital pulses beat
 In his cold breast, and life's restored heat
 Mixed with cold death through parts disused runs,
 And to each joint gives trembling motions.
 The sinews stretch, the carcase from the ground
 Rises not by degrees, but at one bound
 Stands bolt upright; the eyes with twinkling hard
 Are open'd; not dead nor yet alive appeared
 The face; his paleness still and stiffness stays;
 He stands at this revival in amaze.
 But his dumb sealed-up lips no murmur made,
 Only an answering tongue and voice he had' *.

This description of the raising of the dead, according to Gentile notions, by the return of the spirit, 'ghost,' or soul, into the material or natural body,—so different in character from the bringing up of Samuel by the witch of Endor †,—was written by the heathen poet almost at the very moment when the Apostle Paul was telling the Gentile converts to Christianity at Corinth that it is not the corruptible and natural, but the incorruptible and spiritual body, that is raised from the dead!

Independently of this, the heathens all knew by experience that

* *Op. cit. lib. vi. tr. May.*

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 11-20.

every one of their Emperors was made a God as soon as he died, and mostly during his lifetime. Consequently they were not likely to be content with what they could only regard as the simple apotheosis of 'Christos.' With a view to conciliate them, to meet their prejudices, it became a necessity with the Elders of the Church, who themselves were mostly converts from paganism, and could not altogether divest themselves of their heathen notions, that the truth, which had been sufficient for the primitive Jewish Congregation, should be modified in such a manner as to render it more acceptable, more intelligible perhaps, to the Gentile converts, who now formed the bulk of the Church.

This radical change would doubtless have taken place gradually and almost imperceptibly; for, whilst the doctrines of the preachers of the Gospel operated on the minds of the converts, the opinions and feelings of the converts could not have failed to react on those of their teachers, and to lead to modifications in their doctrines, as the same are known to have done in their rites. The ceremonial law of Moses, for instance, though not dispensed with among the Apostles themselves and their Jewish converts, was formally and authoritatively abrogated to meet the case of the Gentile converts; and thus it soon became no longer binding on the whole Christian Church, including those who were believing Jews.

This action and reaction in the diffusion and transfusion of religious faith is, however, not a singular phenomenon. It is the effect of what may be called the law of moral gravitation, witnessed daily in the relations of nations with nations, classes with classes, individuals with individuals. The more powerful of the two may influence in a greater degree the actions, the thoughts, the destinies of the weaker; and yet the weaker is in like manner, though in a less degree, not without operation on the stronger. We have a familiar example here at home. In England the Normans conquered the Saxons, and impressed on them their strong mark, which remains unto this day on the conquered race, though in the result the conquerors themselves have yielded to the preponderating Saxon element. So, too, in

India, the British are introducing among the natives of that country their laws, their manners and customs, their arts and sciences, their religion : it is for future ages to tell what will be the ultimate effect upon the inhabitants of India both of native and of foreign extraction. But, even at the present day, the infant Bramo-Somaj reformation of Hindoo polytheism, though manifestly a product of Christianity, seems to indicate that no form of the dogmatic Christianity of Europe now preached in India is likely to become the religion of the future population.

It was only natural, then, that the early Gentile converts to Christianity should have required something tangible ; and that the Elders of the Congregation, in obedience to this natural law, should have connived at, acquiesced in, fostered, and eventually promulgated as an article of faith, the belief in the Messiah's Resurrection in the flesh, and, as a logical consequence, the belief in the Resurrection in the body of all human beings.

Though the precise steps by which this momentous change took place cannot be positively pointed out, still the several Gospel histories show manifest traces of the course pursued.

In all four Gospels it is stated that the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulchre on Friday afternoon, just before the commencement of the Sabbath ; and in the first Gospel alone it is added that on the following morning the sepulchre was sealed and a watch set by Pilate, at the request of the chief priests and Pharisees, lest the disciples should come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead'*. In the same Gospel it is added, that the saying that the disciples had actually stolen away the body of Jesus 'is commonly reported among the Jews until this day'†; which proves beyond all question that this portion of that document, like the similar statement introduced into the text of the Jewish historian Josephus‡, must have been written long after the event recorded ; so that it is of no real value as evidence of the fact itself.

All four canonical Gospels likewise concur in representing that

* Matth. xxvii. 62-66.

† Matth. xxviii. 15.

‡ See above, Chapter III. page 31.

on the morning of the following first day of the week (Sunday), on the sepulchre being visited, it was found to be open and the body of Jesus no longer there; ‘an angel’ in the first Gospel—‘a young man’ in the second—‘two men in shining garments’ in the third—‘two angels’ in the fourth—being seen there, who, in the first three Gospels, informed the visitors that Jesus had risen*; whilst in the fourth it was Jesus himself who did so†. These discrepancies on so important a subject as that of the Resurrection of the Messiah, the one great fact on which, as Bishop Wilberforce truly says, ‘the existence and purpose of the Church rest,’ are most significant, as showing that, although at the time when those histories were written, the fact of the Resurrection itself was accepted as indisputably true, there was no agreement as to the manner in which it had occurred.

Another remarkable discrepancy is, that, whereas in the first Gospel the sepulchre is described as having been sealed and watched, the second and third Gospels relate how the women of Galilee, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, came early on the Sunday morning, bringing sweet spices, that they might anoint the body of Jesus‡; which, unless they could have withdrawn the watch and unsealed the sepulchre, it would have been physically impossible for them to do.

The discrepancies with respect to the appearance of our Lord to the persons by whom he was seen after his Resurrection are even greater than those already mentioned; but, at the same time, they are of such a character that they seem to divulge the process by which they came into existence. In the consideration now to be given to those discrepancies it must be borne in mind that, according to the direct testimony of the Apostle Paul, the appearance of Jesus to himself was spiritual, and inferentially that it was likewise spiritually that he was ‘seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; . . . after that he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles’§; and as this testimony was given within

* Matth. xxviii. 6; Mark xvi. 6; Luke xxiv. 6.

† John xx. 14-17.

‡ Mark xvi. 1; Luke xxiv. 1.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 5-7.

thirty years after the occurrence of the events so recorded, it has the best claim to be considered as true. In fact, it will be assumed to be so in the analysis now to be made of the statements made by the several Evangelists.

In the second Gospel, which, as regards the latter portion of it at least, was apparently the earliest written, it is said that, after Jesus had risen on the first day of the week, ‘he appeared first to Mary Magdalene’ alone; that afterwards ‘he appeared in another form’ unto two of the disciples ‘as they walked and went into the country’; and that subsequently ‘he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat’*. It will be seen that though this statement differs completely from that of Paul as to the persons to whom Jesus appeared, yet the two agree in affirming that he was ‘seen’ only; no mention being made of any personal contact with the body of Jesus. And there is this further statement peculiar to the second Gospel, that on the second occasion when Jesus was seen, he ‘appeared in another form,’ which he could hardly have done had he been in his natural material body. And, besides this, when he appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, no allusion is made to his having eaten with them, as he is declared to have done in the third and fourth Gospels. So far, then, as the second Gospel is concerned, the appearance of our Lord after his Resurrection was spiritual, as Paul declares it to have been.

We come next to the first Gospel. In this the supernatural occurrences at the sepulchre are more strongly marked than in the second Gospel, which shows the growth of the tradition; and it is narrated that as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were running to bring his disciples word, ‘behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him’†. Here, then, is the first intimation that the appearance of Jesus was in his natural material body. If the expression, ‘they held him by the feet,’ is to be accepted in the literal sense in which it would be understood at the present day by the natives of northern Europe,—and looking to the meaning of the

* Mark xvi. 9-14.

† Matth. xxviii. 9.

Greek verb *κραπεω*, ‘to seize,’ ‘to hold fast,’ used in the text, it certainly must be so,—the actual contact of Mary Magdalene and her companion with the person of Jesus is positively affirmed. And yet it may be open to question whether the expression in the Jewish original of Matthew’s Gospel, of which the Greek word *εκπαρησαν* is only a translation, may not have been figurative; just as the courtly Spaniard of the present day, when taking leave of a lady, says, ‘Me pongo á los piés de Usted’ (‘I place myself at your feet’), or even ‘Beso á Usted los piés’ (‘I kiss your feet’), where the matter-of-fact Englishman merely says ‘Good morning’; so that all that was really intended was, that the women threw themselves at Jesus’s feet,—prostrated themselves before him. We see how the verb ‘to adore’ has lost its primary meaning, which is ‘ore precari’; it being now generally used in the sense of mute or silent worship, an inward feeling of excessive love or reverence, rather than as signifying the outward act of oral supplication. Should this construction be the correct one, it will be seen that actual contact with the person of Jesus is not absolutely affirmed even in the first Gospel; though it may well be implied (as perhaps it was intended it should be), owing to the ambiguity of the expression made use of. At all events we perceive in this statement in the first Gospel distinct traces of the transition from Paul’s declaration of the spiritual appearance of Jesus to the positive and unequivocal assertions in the third and fourth Gospels that that appearance was in his natural material body.

It has been pointedly remarked by the Duke of Somerset that, ‘even in relating the great miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus, the two earliest Gospels close their narratives with expressions of doubt and unbelief’*. The first says that ‘the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted’†. The second says that Jesus ‘appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went

* ‘Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism,’ p. 44.

† Math. xxviii. 16, 17.

into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue : neither believed they them. Afterwards he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he had risen'*. Nevertheless, from these concurrent statements, it is manifest it was not the nature and character of our Lord's appearance that was the subject of their disbelief, but the actual fact of his Resurrection. In the third and fourth Gospels, on the contrary, it was not the fact itself, but the nature and character of that fact that was doubted by the disciples.

By the time when the third Gospel was written, the Gentile element had gained, or was gaining, the preponderance ; and the history, which had now become legendary, was modified accordingly. Here Peter goes to the empty sepulchre after the women had been there ; but neither to him nor to them does the Lord then appear ; but to the 'two disciples' of the second Gospel, one of whom was named Cleopas, and the other apparently Simon, but not Simon Peter †. The meeting is said to have occurred on the way from Jerusalem to 'a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem three-score furlongs' ; into which village he accompanied them, explaining to them on the road how 'the Messiah ought to have suffered those things, and to enter into his glory.' There they supped : 'And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him ; and he vanished out of their sight' ‡. Here, by the breaking of bread, it is manifest that Jesus was represented as being present in his natural body. And this is confirmed by the further statement, that when the two disciples returned to Jerusalem they 'found the eleven [of course including Simon Peter] gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.' And then it continues that 'as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified

* Mark xvi. 12-14.

† Luke xxiv. 18, 34.

‡ Luke xxiv. 31-32.

and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.' After this he ate with them 'a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb'; and then 'he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven' *.

This statement, it will be perceived, is an explicit and categorical contradiction of St. Paul's declaration concerning the resurrection of the dead:—'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body'; for that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.' Had the writer of the third Gospel intended to aim at the Apostle's preaching, he could not have done so more directly. And this would seem to confirm the opinion expressed in a previous Chapter †, that this Gospel was the first attempt on the part of the Elders of the early Christian Church to assert their authority in putting forth an 'orthodox' narrative of the life of Jesus; and as it was the preaching of the Jew Paul that they had most cause to controvert, they craftily attributed the composition of this Gospel, as well as of its supplement, the Acts of the Apostles, to one of Paul's own companions, Luke, 'the beloved physician.'

In the fourth Gospel the evidence of our Lord's Resurrection in the flesh is completely and conclusively established. The details and circumstances are, however, again very different. Mary Magdalene is described as going alone to the sepulchre, which she finds open. She runs and tells, not only Simon Peter, but 'the other disciple whom Jesus loved,' namely, John, the pretended writer of this Gospel, who is thus made to stamp it with the authority of an eye-witness; and these two visit the sepulchre together, and then go home. But Mary Magdalene, being left alone, sees two angels in white, and afterwards Jesus

* Luke xxiv. 33-51.

† Chapter III. page 35.

himself, the ‘Noli me tangere’ scene with whom is indelibly imprinted on the minds of all Christians, through the representations of it from the pencils of the most famous painters. Jesus next appears to the disciples ; shows them ‘his hands and [not his feet, but] his side,’—because it is in this Gospel alone that when on the Cross he was pierced in the side with a spear ; and after this occurs the memorable conversation with the incredulous Thomas, to whom Jesus said, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God !’*

Not content with this, the writer of the fourth Gospel must needs add what he evidently intended to be a ‘clincher,’ as it is vulgarly called ; namely, the raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the grave twice as long as Jesus himself. But, as has already been remarked in a former page†, the pseudo-John proved a great deal too much, as is usually the case with an over-zealous false witness.

In a preceding Chapter of the present work‡ it has been asserted and exemplified that no untruth, no fiction, ever obtains general adoption, unless it has some real fact on which it is based. The foregoing investigation and comparison of the several statements in the four Gospels shows how the Resurrection of our Lord in his natural body was, step by step, developed from the original evidence of St. Paul, that the Resurrection was spiritual and not corporeal. In the second Gospel history, the earliest in date as regards our Lord’s appearance, nothing is alleged that is in opposition to the Apostle’s testimony. In the concluding portion of the first Gospel, as has been already explained§, the bodily presence of Jesus may or may not have been intended to be affirmed by the statement that the women ‘held him by the feet.’ In the third Gospel, however, not only is the appearance of Jesus in the flesh asserted, but his spiritual nature is expressly denied. And, lastly, in the fourth Gospel the fact is unblushingly

* John xx. 27, 28.

† Chapter XV. page 182.

‡ Chapter IV. page 51 *et seqq.*

§ See above, page 285.

asserted in the name of an eye-witness, the Apostle John; it being substantiated by the minutest circumstantial details, and corroborated by a pretended miracle, which, if it were true, would be a greater miracle than the Resurrection of the Messiah himself, besides depriving our Lord of his peculiar merit of being 'the firstfruits of them that slept.'

A few words have to be added respecting the Ascension of our Lord, which subject is narrated by the historians as discrepantly as are his appearances to his disciples.

In both the first and second Gospels Jesus is said to have declared to his disciples at the Paschal supper, 'After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee'* . Accordingly, in those two Gospels the angel at the sepulchre announced to Mary Magdalene and her companions, 'Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him'† ; or, in other words, 'Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see him, as he said unto you'‡ . And in the first Gospel it is added, 'Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them'§ . In accordance with this, the fourth Gospel likewise states, in the last Chapter, that, after his appearance to the disciples and Thomas at Jerusalem,—or, it may be, at Bethany,—'Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias'|| , that is to say, in Galilee. In these three narratives the only allusion to the actual Ascension of our Lord is in the second Gospel, where it is briefly said, 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God'¶ .

In the face of these concurrent statements in the first, second, and fourth Gospels, it is asserted in the third Gospel that Jesus said to his disciples when he appeared to them, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted

* Matth. xxvi. 32 ; Mark xiv. 28.

† Matth. xxviii. 7.

‡ Mark xvi. 7.

§ Matth. xxviii. 16.

|| John xxi. 1.

¶ Mark xvi. 19.

up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy ; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God'*. In the Acts of the Apostles the actual place of the Ascension is specified as being 'the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey'†. And from the same Book it appears that the disciples remained in Jerusalem, not only till the day of Pentecost, the feast of weeks, when they received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit ‡, but subsequently until the time of the martyrdom of Stephen, when 'there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles'§, who appear to have continued to make Jerusalem their head-quarters. In other words, they did not go into Galilee at all.

No attempt shall be made here to reconcile and harmonize these discrepant and even contradictory statements ; though they may be accounted for by the fact that they were not made till long after our Lord's death, and then by persons who, not having been eye-witnesses themselves, could only record what they had gathered from tradition ; and it has been shown in a preceding Chapter|| in how short a period a 'tradition' may be built up and also 'developed.' All that is necessary to be dwelt on is, that, as regards the Resurrection of our Lord, the assertions of the first Gospel in its last chapter, and of the third and fourth Gospels, are quite insufficient to rebut the explicit testimony of the Apostle Paul, whose writings may be relied on, not only as being by far the earliest, but as being those of an eye-witness, and actually written at the date they bear. At the same time it is most important to be borne in mind, that, however much the writers of those three Gospels may, for the reasons here imputed to them, have altered the nature and character of

* Luke xxiv. 49-53.

† Acts i. 12.

‡ Acts ii. 1-4.

§ Acts viii. 1.

|| Chapter IV. pages 52-56.

our Lord's appearance on earth after his death and burial, they all agree with Paul in affirming the absolute fact of his Resurrection from the dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE APOSTLE PAUL.

In the preceding Chapter it has been explained how it came to pass that the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus the Messiah was dogmatically declared to be fundamentally different from what it is described as having been by the Apostle Paul, the only witness of his Master's appearance whose account is to be regarded as authentic. It is not to be imagined that so great a change would have taken place without its being accompanied by circumstances, less momentous perhaps, but still important in themselves, and yet more important on account of their bearing on the history of early Christianity. Above all, we may be assured that a difference of opinion on so grave a subject could not have arisen, without its causing a corresponding difference of feeling among the persons entertaining such diametrically opposite opinions. And the fact that such difference of feeling did exist is established on conclusive evidence, though the reason for its existence may not be correctly stated.

The Gospels profess to record the actions and sayings of our Lord Jesus. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles in like manner professes to relate the history of the foundation of the Christian Church by the immediate disciples of Jesus; and it is the only memorial of that history extant, with the sole exception of the Epistles of St. Paul. The authorship of that Book, as has already been stated, is usually attributed to 'Luke, the beloved physician' * of Paul, and a companion of that Apostle; but this is apparently only a portion of the gigantic fraud, stealthily and systemati-

* Col. iv. 14.

cally perpetrated, which took Christianity out of the hands of the Jew, Saul of Tarsus, to place it in those of the Gentile Elders of the Church, who succeeded and supplanted him.

How this fraud has operated down to the present day is shown by the Duke of Somerset, who thus tersely states the prevalent opinion respecting the differences between Paul and the other Apostles :—‘The hostility to St. Paul arose not from his acceptance of Christianity, but from his repudiation of Judaism. While the older Apostles were living undisturbed at Jerusalem, combining a belief in Christ with a daily observance of the Jewish law, Paul had broken loose from the law, and openly proclaimed that its obligations, even for the Hebrew race, were now at an end ; that the law was a miserable bondage, burdensome in this life, and useless in the life to come’*.

The declaration of the Apostle himself respecting the virtue and obligation of the Mosaic law, which will be quoted in a subsequent page †, demonstrates how entirely, how radically incorrect the foregoing assertion is, and how erroneous it is to imagine that Paul did not, until the latest hour of his life, remain a Jew, like as did his Master, Jesus, whom we know to have kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread and eaten the Paschal Lamb, with all the rites of the most orthodox Judaism, on the very night before his Crucifixion ‡. It is, therefore, the height of inconsistency, not to say absurdity, to impute Paul’s discredit among his own Gentile converts to his anti-Jewish teaching and Gentile tendencies.

Without questioning the fact of Paul’s serious quarrel with Peter and the other Apostles respecting the obligation of the Gentile converts to conform to the ceremonial law of Moses, which he compelled those bigoted ritualists to relax in favour of such converts §, it may be affirmed that the true cause of the disfavour in which the great Apostle of the Gentiles subsequently stood in the very Congregations (‘Churches’) which he had himself founded, arose from his having been *too Jewish* in his opinions and teaching to please them, and, above all, from his having

* ‘Christian Theology’ &c. pp. 70, 71. † See pages 304, 305.

‡ See above, Chap. XVII. pages 220–231. § Comp. Gal. ii. with Acts xv.

preached the spiritual Resurrection and appearance of the Messiah, which was so repugnant to the Gentile mind.

It did not take long for this to happen. When, less than forty years after the Crucifixion of Jesus, Jerusalem fell before the victorious arms of Titus Vespasian, most of our Lord's companions, the first Apostles, must have ceased to exist, and the Jewish members of the infant Congregation of believers in the Messiah, whom they had taught, were either slain, made captives, or dispersed. There was no longer any connected body of 'Apostles and Elders,' whose authority might be recognized by the various Congregations that had been formed throughout the Roman Empire; and, consequently, each of those Congregations was free to act independently, and without the control or supervision of any central body: although it is not improbable that Antioch, where 'the disciples were first called Christians,' and where the Apostle Peter is said to have been the first bishop, may, to a certain extent, have assumed to be the successor and representative of Jerusalem. According to Eusebius there was not, after the death of the Apostles, a single Jew among the bishops of the Congregations ('Churches') outside of Judæa; and, even in that country, the Congregation that was established in the new city of Ælia Capitolina, built by Hadrian on the site of Jerusalem after the defeat of the Antichrist Bar Cocaba, consisted of Gentile converts, presided over by a Gentile bishop named Mark, who abandoned entirely the observance of the Levitical law, in order that they might not be confounded with the proscribed Jews.

A measure such as this could not but have been most offensive to such members of the Christian Congregation as still followed the example of the Apostle Peter in adhering to the Mosaical rites; and, accordingly, many of them separated themselves from the brethren, and founded distinct Congregations ('Churches'), in which the ceremonial law was maintained in its primitive dignity, authority, and lustre.

These seceding Congregations, who are generally known under the designation of Ebionites, are said to have held St. Paul in

abhorrence, denying his authority as an Apostle, denouncing him as a heretic and latitudinarian, and treating his writings with the utmost disrespect; as it was only natural for them to do. Epiphanius relates that the Ebionites circulated a wild story of how Paul was a Pagan, who, for love of the high priest's daughter, became a Jew, but that, being disappointed of his wish, he abjured Judaism, and wrote against circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Law *.

As, however, these Ebionites were regarded as heretics by the Gentile Churches at Jerusalem and elsewhere throughout Christendom, their antipathy to Paul, which they evidently inherited from the Judaizing Peter and his companions, ought rather to have endeared Paul to the 'orthodox' Gentile Christians. And hence there is reason for the opinion that the original dispute with Peter and the other Apostles, respecting the obligation of the Jewish ceremonial law on the Gentiles, was speciously put forward as the cause of Paul's subsequent disfavour, instead of the vital question of the nature and character of the Messiah's Resurrection from the dead.

Such being the case, a very natural course on the part of the crafty heads of the Gentile Church of the period immediately succeeding that of the Apostles would have been to ignore, as far as possible, all that Paul had said and written on the subject: where this could not be done, to qualify and distort it; and generally to modify the narrative of his life, adventures, and teachings in such fashion, that, whilst professedly according to him the merit of being the Apostle of the Gentiles, of which they could not deprive him, they might still manage to divest him of his peculiarities, and thus associate him with doctrines and practices opposed to those he really professed and taught. As to his writings, it was, of course, impossible to suppress them altogether, because they were too widely in circulation among many of the separate Congregations. And yet, as has been suggested in a previous Chapter †, those writings were, doubtless, destroyed wherever it was practicable; and where this could not be, a gloss

* See 'Paul of Tarsus,' by a Graduate, 1872.

† Chapter III. page 42.

was put upon them, so as to cause them and their writer to be depreciated and maligned; in addition to which, other writings ('Epistles') were imputed to him, of which he was not the author.

It was then in this hostile spirit that the Book of the Acts of the Apostles was composed, which was most assuredly not written by a companion of Paul, as it so ingeniously pretends to be, just as the fourth Gospel pretends to be the composition of the Apostle John; though it cannot well be doubted that it was based on original materials furnished by some such person. As to its being written partly in the third and partly in the first person, this may have been done merely as a blind. But even if it were otherwise, the fact of its being so written would of itself prove nothing. How many plausible pseudo-autobiographies do we not possess at the present day! The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe and the Travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, for instance, will hardly be accepted as genuine on the faith of their being written in the first person.

Admitting, then, the Book of the Acts to be a substantially true narrative of the main events it professes to record, and also—as the general opinion is—that it was written with the intention, in the first instance, of slurring over the differences which undoubtedly existed between the Judaizing Peter and the Gentilizing Paul respecting the obligation of the ceremonial law on the Gentile converts; it has now to be shown that such differences were insignificant, in comparison with the quarrel which subsequently sprung up between the Jew Paul and the Gentile successors of Peter and the other Apostles respecting the nature of the Messiah's Resurrection. But before proceeding to the consideration of what must be regarded as the main cause of dissension, it is necessary to say a few words on the subject of the earlier differences which, from the evidence of the Canonical Scriptures alone, are proved to have existed.

Now, if we compare the Acts with the only certainly authentic writings that we possess relating to the same period, namely, the Epistles of Paul himself, the conclusion come to above with

respect to the suspicious character of the former Book is strongly corroborated. A writer, who is well able to sift evidence, but who appears to have treated the Jesus of History rather as an advocate at the bar would do than as a judge on the bench, sums up in the following lucid manner the question between Paul and the other Apostles, as narrated by the writer of the Acts in his fifteenth chapter, and by Paul in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians :—‘ No one can carefully weigh the account that Paul there gives of his own position, conduct, and principles, and of the relation in which he stood to the older Apostles, without being struck by the great difference, and even contradiction, between that account and the description of him given in the Acts. There is not often any direct denial in the latter of assertions made by Paul himself,—so that harmonists and apologists are able to reconcile the two accounts externally ; but the real difference is fundamental, and cannot be explained away. If the author of the Acts be correct, then Paul in his letters is a vain boaster—arrogating to himself the fruits of other men’s labours, and claiming an independence of thought and action which his whole history falsifies. And, on the other hand, if Paul is to be believed, then—subject to the deductions that are always necessary when the most truthful man is defending his own conduct, deductions that refer, not to the events as viewed from his own point of view, but to the necessity of remembering that these events will appear in a very different light to his opponents,—the account in the Acts is altogether unreliable ; and this appears conclusively to show that the work could not have been written by a companion of Paul. For, even admitting that he might have learned from Paul himself the real state of the case, which he was compelled in the interests of truth to depict, he could not have truly described Paul as acquiescing in the subordinate position assigned to him, or have refrained from giving a hint, at least, of his pretensions to originality and independence’*.

It must be repeated that what is here said does not necessarily

* Sir Richard Norton, ‘The Jesus of History,’ p. 343.

impugn or invalidate the authority of the Book of the Acts as a substantially true narrative of the events it professes to record. It is the colour its writer gives to those events, the light in which he places them, that is at fault and has to be guarded against; just as we find to be the case with all histories, both ancient and modern, which are rarely, if ever, written without some strong bias on the part of their authors. We may take for instance the events of the present century in the neighbouring country of France, which present themselves in widely different lights, and almost in different forms, according as they are narrated by Royalist, Imperialist, or Republican writers, all professing to represent them truly and correctly.

It is unnecessary to discuss further the original dispute among the Apostles themselves, for the purpose of showing how the writer of the Acts systematically coloured and misrepresented the various events recorded by him, even if he did not actually misstate them. It will be sufficient to dwell on the fact that the object of that writer evidently was to damn with faint praise the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and so to invalidate his authority,—not, however, among the Jewish believers, but among his own Gentile converts. And with this view it was that Paul is never spoken of as an Apostle, but is associated with Barnabas, and pointedly distinguished from the original disciples.

Thus much having been said on the general subject of this systematic animosity against Paul, it shall now be shown how the same was made to operate in respect of the particular fact of the Messiah's appearance to his disciples after his death and burial.

By Paul himself we are told that the Lord 'was seen of Cephas' and 'then of the twelve'; which statement alone, by giving a priority to the disciple thus specially named, manifests Paul's good faith, and the absence on his part of any personal ill will towards 'the Prince of the Apostles,' whom he might easily have refrained from mentioning, had he been actuated by the same uncharitable feeling that prompted the writer of the Acts. 'After that,' continues Paul, 'he was seen of above five

hundred brethren at once ;' next 'he was seen of James ; then of all the Apostles ; and last of all [says he] he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.' And in conclusion he makes the humble and penitent confession, which more than all must be accepted as a proof of his sincerity :—' For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Congregation of God '.*

Now, the chief fact to be considered here is the *visible* appearance of the Lord, which is expressly asserted, and, as it would almost seem, intentionally reiterated and insisted on by Paul :— 'He was seen'—' He was seen.' And in another part of the same Epistle, the Apostle again expressly asserts the visible appearance to himself—' Have I not *seen* Jesus the Messiah, our Lord ?'†

In striking contrast to these explicit declarations of Paul himself, the three several descriptions of the Apostle's vision given in the Acts make no mention whatever of Jesus's appearance to him. The first of these descriptions, in the ninth chapter, is that of the historian ; the other two, in the twenty-second and twenty-sixth chapters, profess to record the words of the Apostle Paul himself. There are certain variations in the three descriptions, but these would not, in themselves, be sufficiently important to give rise to suspicion as to the general accuracy of the record. They have often formed the subject of discussion, and therefore they shall not be further alluded to here. The main point in all three descriptions is, that whereas Paul himself, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, expressly declares that the Messiah was 'seen' by him, the Apostle is uniformly represented by the writer of the Acts as having merely 'heard a voice.' And not only does this writer suppress the fact that Jesus was actually seen by Paul, but he describes the Apostle as having been struck to the earth and blinded by the light from heaven, so that it would have been physically impossible for him to have seen Jesus : in fact it is said that, when he 'arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, *he saw no man !*' And

* 1 Cor. xv. 5-9.

† 1 Cor. ix. 1.

the writer then goes on to relate how ‘a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias,’ was directed in a vision to go to ‘Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight’*; to all which marked particulars—and especially that of his having seen Ananias in a vision, instead of Jesus—the Apostle himself does not allude in the slightest degree.

The testimony of Paul having been thus cleverly neutralized, the next step was to represent the appearance of Jesus to the other disciples as having been in his natural human body. The gradual process by which this was effected has been detailed in the preceding Chapter †.

But this in itself did not suffice. It was necessary, as regards Paul, not merely to suppress what he had distinctly affirmed, but to make him say, or seem to say, what he did not say. This was done in the following manner:—In his discourse in the synagogue at Antioch, in Pisidia, the Apostle is represented as referring to the saying of the Psalmist, ‘Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption’‡, and then as continuing: ‘For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption’§; which assertion, though it may be construed so as not to be in direct contradiction to the Apostle’s own words cited and commented on in the preceding Chapter of the present work ||, would naturally be understood in a contradictory sense, as it undoubtedly was the intention of the writer it should be. And such a construction would the more readily be put upon the words thus imputed to Paul, because Peter had already been described as also quoting the same words of the Psalmist, and applying them in like manner to the Resurrection of the Messiah. Only Peter’s words are, ‘His soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption’¶; which is not merely giving a meaning to the text that it does not necessarily

* Acts ix. 3–12.

† Chapter XX. pages 284–288.

‡ Ps. xvi. 10.

§ Acts xiii. 35–37.

|| Pages 274–276.

¶ Acts ii. 31.

bear, but is much more definite than the expression subsequently attributed to Paul, into whose mouth it would hardly have been safe to put the words ‘neither *his flesh* did see corruption,’ when speaking of the Messiah’s Resurrection, which he had declared to have been only spiritual.

When once the Messiah’s Resurrection in the body had been foisted by the Gentile priesthood on their ignorant and credulous flocks and had become a dogma of the ‘Church,’ it is mere surplusage to add that this dogma was maintained with all the virulence of the ‘odium theologicum’ which is so characteristic of ‘Christian’ charity, in accordance with the ‘new’ or ‘eleventh’ Commandment, that ‘orthodox’ believers are to ‘love one another,’ but nobody else!*

There can be no question as to the fact that in the early ages of Christianity there was an intensely strong party-feeling against Paul, of which the Acts of the Apostles give but an indistinct echo. In the Book of the Apocalypse, for instance, the flattering com-

* See above, Chapter XVI. pages 202, 213.

March 23rd, 1872.—Just as this sheet is going through the press, the following striking instance of the true operation of the pretended ‘New Commandment’ of the fourth Gospel has most opportunely presented itself, in a notice of Dean Stanley’s ‘Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland,’ contained in the ‘Atheneum’ of to-day:—‘The real blot on the book is that which arises from the writer having so speedily forgotten the terms of that “eleventh commandment,” which he has prefixed to his Lectures as indicating the spirit which pervades them. The lecturer starts with the excellent resolution to forget, as far as may be, the faults and errors of those whom he passes under review, and to make the most of their virtues. The work was designed to be an irenic, but, to use one of Dean Stanley’s own epithets, it is a “sulphurous” irenic: by the time the reader has perused one half of it, he discovers that it is, in truth, a bitter polemic; that it is an elaborate and defiant panegyric on the Established Church of Scotland at the expense of all other denominations, past and present. The virtuous resolution to look at the best side of every man and every institution too soon becomes obscured, and the lecturer, imbibing the genuine spirit of the old Covenanters of Dunsee-Law, appears as the uncompromising advocate of a single party, animated by the old Covenanting belief—

There is nane in the richt but we.’

pliment to the Church of Ephesus—‘I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars’*—is generally understood to be paid at Paul’s expense. But this could not have been on account of his anti-Jewish proclivities, but because it was desired that his own Gentile converts in that city should cease to put faith in their teacher. The like may be said of the allusion to the Nicolaitanes, contained in the messages to the same Church † and that of Pergamos ‡, and of the mention of ‘them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie’§, in the message to the Church of Philadelphia.

So, too, there is a passage in the Epistle to the Smyrneans of Ignatius, St. Peter’s successor as Bishop of Antioch, occurring almost immediately after his affirmation, not only of the Lord’s Resurrection in the natural body, but of his belief that he was in the flesh even then (*καὶ πιστεῦω ὅτι*), which is highly deserving of notice. It says, ‘Now these things, beloved, I put you in mind of, not questioning that you yourselves will also believe they are so. But I arm you beforehand against certain beasts in the shape of men; whom ye must not only not receive, but if it be possible must not meet with. Only ye must pray for them, that, if it be the will of God, they may repent, which however is difficult’||. This truly ‘Christian’ warning against ‘beasts in the shape of men’ was evidently directed against such as maintained the contrary doctrine of the spiritual nature of the Resurrection of the Messiah, as taught by Paul.

A further instance shall be given in the following extract from a volume, which has been published since the manuscript of the present work was placed in the printer’s hands:—‘Among the relics of early Christian literature is a narrative, . . . which gives certain imaginary conversations between St. Peter and other Scriptural personages on the one hand, and Simon the Magian on the other. The authorship of the work is ascribed to

* Revel. ii. 2. † Ibid. 6. ‡ Ibid. 15. § Rev. iii. 9.

|| ‘Ignatius’ (Ante-Nicene Christian Library), p. 242.

Clement of Rome. But this is a manifest absurdity. The date of the composition is probably the middle of the second century. But, though the title of the book is a forgery, it undoubtedly depicts the opinions of those sectaries who existed up to the fourth century in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, and who, recognizing the twelve Apostles as the only source of authority, united Judaism to Christianity. At one time they were a powerful party, and, as they combated with Paul in his lifetime, so they succeeded, for a century at least, in overturning his authority in the Eastern Churches. The Homilies of Clement represent Peter as arguing against and demolishing the sophistries of Simon. Some of these are the fantastic tenets of Gnosticism. But, in many particulars, Paul is plainly glanced at. Thus, the authenticity of a personal revelation is distinctly repudiated,—Peter alleging that even an angel could not address man except through the interposition of a human body; and, when Simon replies that a vision is given to none but the good, Peter quotes examples to the contrary from the Old Testament. “If,” says he to Simon, “you have been visited by him, taught by him in an hour, and made an Apostle; utter his words, interpret his sayings, love his Apostles, and do not proclaim war against me, who have lived with him. You have withheld me, who am the solid rock, and foundation of the Church.” It is difficult to avoid concluding that St. Paul is referred to in these expressions*.

The writer of the foregoing passage has, however, failed to perceive the force of the assertion, that ‘even an angel could not address man except through the interposition of a human body’; which, though strikingly in accordance with the heathen poet Lucan’s description of the means adopted by the witch Erictho to enable the dead soldier’s spirit to inform Sextus Pompeius of his father’s fate†, is no notion of ‘sectaries,’ but is ‘strictly orthodox.’ On the authority of the third and fourth Gospels, the fourth ‘Article of Religion’ of the Established Church of England, as a branch of the Catholic Church, affirms that ‘Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and

* Paul of Tarsus, pp. 234, 235. † See the preceding Chapter, pages 279, 280.

all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature ; where-with he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day.' It is scarcely requisite to repeat that this dogma of the 'Church' is in direct opposition to the teaching of St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, as already shown in the preceding Chapter *.'

It was, however, not on this account alone that the Apostle was in such disfavour among the 'orthodox' Gentile Christians, but also because he was a Jew, who preached the advent of the Messiah precisely as his master, Rabbi Gamaliel, might have preached it, had he been a believer like his gifted and favoured disciple, instead of being only a doubter, which he is represented as having been †, and as King Herod Agrippa evidently was ‡. This is the real cause of the eclipse which, as M. Renan points out in his 'Saint Paul,' the memory of the great Apostle of the Gentiles appears to have undergone, not only in Asia Minor, but also in Corinth, and in fact everywhere among the Gentile Congregations, to whom he had preached the spiritual nature of his Lord's Resurrection. The earliest post-Apostolic writers never mention him ; no legend attaches to his name, like as to those of the other Apostles ; in the countries surrounding the Archipelago, which were the scenes of his ministration, it is not Paul, but the pseudo-John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, the inventor of the miracle of the raising of the body of Lazarus from the dead §, who is traditionally looked up to as the great historical link connecting them with 'Christ.'

It was not till after the sting had been taken out of Paul's preaching by the dogmatical teaching of the Gentile priesthood (of whom the fourth Gospel was the text-book and supreme authority, as it has continuued to be of the Catholic Church unto this day), that the great Apostle was partially readmitted into favour. Still he never acquired so firm a footing as the other Apostles ; and to the present day he is the least popular Saint in Catholic countries. It may be—it doubtless was—on account of

* Page 274 *sq.* † See Acts v. 34-39. ‡ See above, Chapter V. page 66.

§ See above, Chapter XV. pages 181-183.

his ‘ heterodoxy ’ in this respect, that at Rome, which was really his own Church, Paul has been superseded by Peter, who never was there at all !

The fate that the memory of St. Paul has experienced at Malta is, perhaps, the most extraordinary of all. It might have been expected that the Apostle would have been revered there even more than at Rome ; and yet, within the last few years, the ecclesiastical authorities there have, with one accord, withdrawn their island from his patronage, and placed it under that of ‘ the Mother of God.’

When the light resulting from a thorough investigation of St. Paul’s testimony respecting the spiritual Resurrection of the Messiah from the dead shall come to be reflected on his writings generally,—that is to say, such as are unquestionably his, without regard to those others which improperly bear his name,—the same will necessarily receive a very different construction on several essential points from that which has hitherto been put upon them. Such an investigation must, however, be based upon the fact, which seems not to have been taken sufficiently into account, that Paul was a Jew by birth, by education, and in feeling, differing only from the generality of his co-religionists in the belief in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, and in teaching, after his Master’s example, that the observance of the ceremonial law of Moses was no longer essential to salvation, but that the Good Tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven were to be preached to all men alike, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, whether they be bond or free.

How fully the Apostle comprehended his Master’s doctrine, and interpreted it in his Master’s spirit, is convincingly proved by his own words in the Epistle to the Romans :—‘ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will; and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law ; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide to the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, as it is written *. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God †.

Thus did this Jew of the straitest sect, a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel the aged, the grandson of the orthodox Hillel,—who described himself as being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers above many his equals ‡,—teach that even though the Mosaic law was not necessarily to be dispensed with as concerns those born under the law, it was in no sense binding on others; but that every human being, not of the house of Israel, stands in the same relation to the One and Universal Lord, here and hereafter, as the most orthodox Jew; in which he held to the capital truth, taught likewise in the Talmud, that the truly pious of every religious belief will enjoy everlasting bliss in the world to come.

In other words, Paul was a ‘Reformed Jew;’ and the principles of the Reformed Jews of the present day, as expounded by one of

* Is. lii. 5; Ezek. xxxvi. 20-23. † Rom. ii. 17-29, iii. 1-2. ‡ Gal. i. 14.

their most learned and esteemed ministers, correspond, as it is only natural and reasonable they should do, with those of their great co-religionist, the Apostle of the Gentiles; the main, if not the sole, difference between them being, that he believed our Lord Jesus to be the Messiah of prophecy, whereas they have not yet come to perceive and acknowledge this great truth. The Reverend Professor Marks, in a lecture delivered at the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh on December 5th, 1871, when explaining why the Jews do not seek to make proselytes, is reported to have said:—‘On being applied to, as is the case more frequently than it is supposed, by persons of other persuasions, to be received as converts to the Synagogue, the Rabbi meets the application by stating that it is not held by Jews necessary for the salvation of the non-Israelite that he should formally become a member of the Synagogue. “If,” the Rabbi says, “if you believe in and worship the One and Only God, refrain in thought and deed from idolatry, observe the *moral* law of the Pentateuch, and act towards mankind like one who believes himself to be always under the eye of God, you will be regarded by Him that sees all hearts in the same light, and you will meet with the same eternal reward, as the most exemplary Israelite. Do not, then, impose on yourself our ritual obligations, which are binding on the sons and daughters of Israel only”’*.

To Jews who entertain such sentiments as these all true Christians must heartily hold out the hand of fellowship and brotherly love, under the conviction that the belief in our Lord Jesus as the Messiah is all that is wanting on their part to crown their sublime confession of faith; which, revealed to Moses, was avowed and taught by the Messiah himself:—‘Hear, O Israel! the Eternal is our God, the Eternal alone.’ Surely the hour is come when the words of the Prophet may be repeated:—‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her appointed time is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the hand of the Eternal double for all her sins. The voice of

* ‘Jewish Chronicle,’ (N. S.) No. 143, December 22nd, 1871.

him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Eternal, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain ; and the glory of the Eternal shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Eternal hath spoken it' *.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

As long as unity of doctrine prevailed throughout the early Christian Church, there was no need of any formula that might properly be called a Confession of Faith. The belief in the One Eternal God professed by the Jews was necessarily that of the primitive Christians, who simply added to it the conviction that our Lord Jesus was the Messiah, or Anointed King of Prophecy.

But as soon as differences arose within the bosom of the Church, not so much of rites and practices as of doctrines and opinions, the dominant party, arrogating to itself the attribute of orthodoxy, presumed to draw up and enact Creeds, which, whilst professing to be confessions of faith, were in reality tests of unbelief, intended to detect and eradicate heterodoxy and heresy.

Of these dogmatic symbols the earliest is that generally known as 'the Apostles' Creed,' which, however, by no means expresses the belief of the Apostles themselves, but is the production of the period when 'the Resurrection of the Body' had been adopted as a dogma of the dominant party in the Church.

By the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian era the doctrines of the 'orthodox' party had become more 'developed,' and the history of our Lord's life and teaching loaded with

* Is. xl. 1-5.

traditions; whilst ‘heresies’ of various kinds had arisen, which required to be combated by the enunciation and enforcement of more elaborate and more stringent tests of heterodoxy. Hence the Nicene Creed, which to this day is professed by the Orthodox Greek, or Eastern Church, and also, in a somewhat modified form, by the Catholic or Western Church.

Next came the Confession of Faith, commonly called ‘the Creed of St. Athanasius,’ which, however, far from having for its author the champion of orthodoxy whose name it bears, is the production of the Church of Rome in the fifth century; it being, as a matter of course, much longer, more metaphysical and unintelligible, more dogmatical, and more intolerant.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century, whilst not dispensing with the Creeds of the Catholic Church, introduced numerous Confessions and Declarations of Faith, Catechisms, and Articles of Religion, the framers of which seem to have studied more to make them the manifestoes of parties than the professions of faith, of believers in Jehovah and His Messiah,—the Eternal and His Anointed,—‘the Lord and His Christ.’

These incessant endeavours to entrap and enslave the consciences of ignorant men, by imposing upon them doctrines devised by the ingenuity, and yet more by the presumption of their fellow-men, have been most detrimental, not alone to professing Christians themselves, by encouraging among them a spirit of exclusiveness and intolerance, the very reverse of the true spirit of Christianity, but yet more so by giving occasion for scepticism and unbelief; inasmuch as conscientious doubters are thereby induced, and too often driven, to reject such formularies altogether, from their inability to decide which among so many conflicting opinions is the right one, and are thence led to question the Scriptures, on which those formularies profess to be based.

It stands to reason that there can be no Christian unity so long as stress is laid on the expressions of technical theology, which only serve to engender and encourage feelings of ‘envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness,’ instead of fostering the divine

principle of brotherly love inculcated by our Lord and his great Apostle.

Such exclusive confessions of faith may in their day have been deemed necessary, and may even have been found to be beneficial in some respects; but, whether so or not in past ages, it is now high time for them to be repudiated by all true Christians, who, eschewing traditional and dogmatical interpretations, should revert to the original doctrines of the Gospel.

The singular event about to be related, may, without laying undue stress on it, be regarded as a type of Christianity.

Less than half a century after the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, and nine years after the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by Titus Vespasian, the Roman provincial city of Pompeii, at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, experienced a fate more appalling in its suddenness and completeness than even that of the Holy City. With scarcely any warning, an eruption from the mountain overwhelmed the fated city; and yet, strange to say, at the same time preserved it almost in its integrity, by the very means that had seemed to annihilate it so entirely.

After the lapse of nearly eighteen centuries, the remains of the ruined city of Pompeii have been again brought to light, and among them the wonderful discovery has recently been made, in the kitchen of one of the disinterred dwelling-houses, of a ‘fornello,’ or fire-place, on which a copper caldron, or kettle, was found, standing on a trivet, over what at the time of the eruption had been a charcoal fire, just as it might be in any Italian or French house at the present day. The vessel was hermetically sealed and encrusted all over with ‘lapilli,’ or ashes from the volcano, so as to require considerable force to open it; but when it was opened, to the amazement of the bystanders, it was found to be nearly full of water—pure, and perfectly sweet and good.

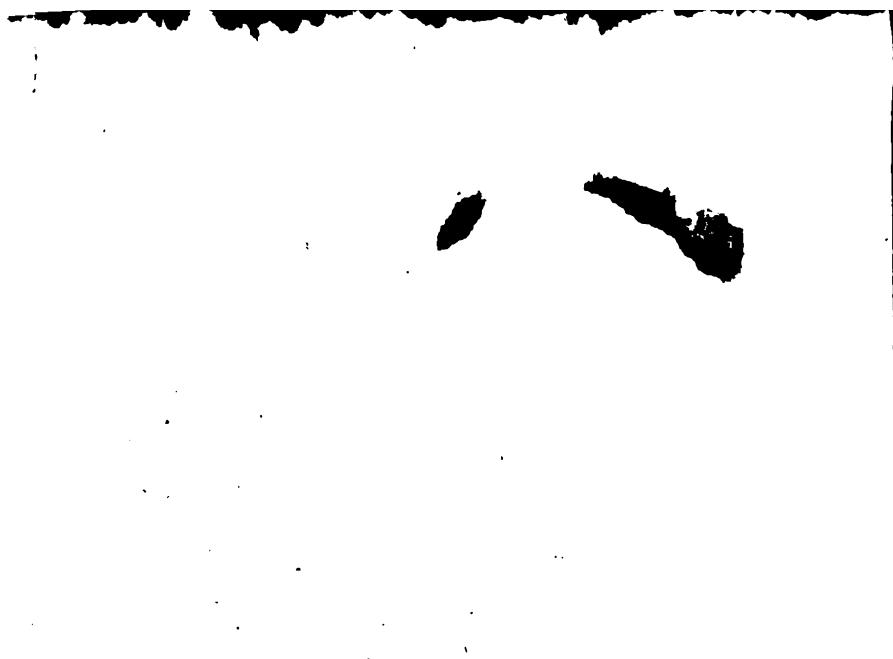
May this extraordinary discovery be accepted as a sign that, under God’s providence, the day has dawned when the believer in our Lord Jesus the Messiah may slake his thirst with the ‘living water’ of the Gospel, which, though in like manner

closed up during so many ages in the brazen caldron of dogmatism, and encrusted over with the foul ashes of tradition, superstition, and error, has yet been marvellously preserved pure, and perfectly sweet and good !

THE END.



5







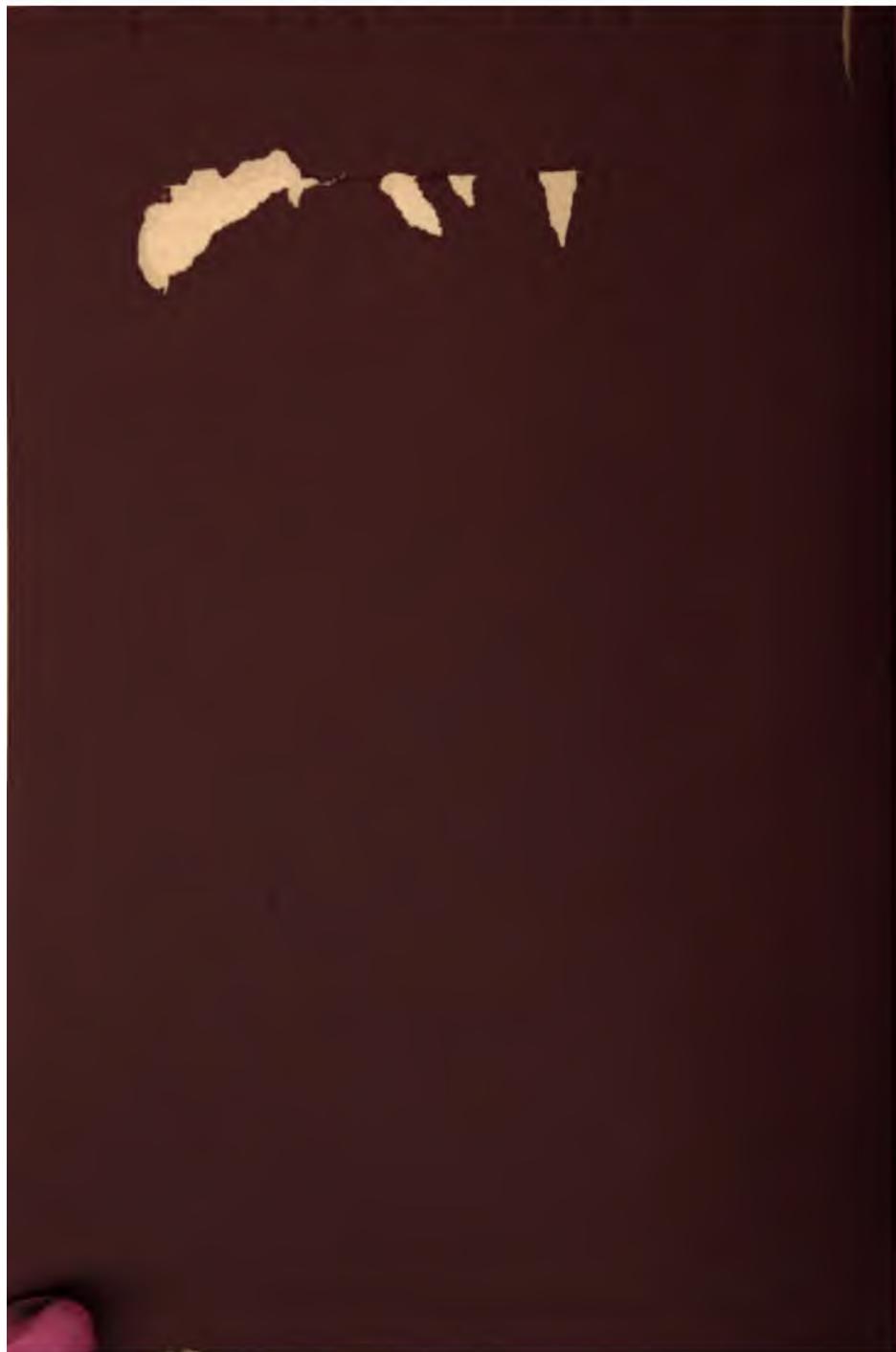
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